DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 109 757 EA 007 345

AUTHOR Yeomans, Edward
TITLE Schools Talk to Parents About the Integrated Day.
INSTITUTION National Association of Independent Schools, Boston, Mass.
PUB DATE Oct 71
NOTE 86p.; Photographs may reproduce poorly
AVAILABLE FROM National Association of Independent Schools, Four Liberty Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02109 ($1.50)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 PLUS POSTAGE. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; *Communication Skills; *Educational Innovation; Elementary Education; *Information Dissemination; Integrated Activities; *Integrated Curriculum; *Parent School Relationship; Private Schools

ABSTRACT

This booklet presents a collection of statements prepared by five different independent schools to inform parents about their school's plans for adopting the Integrated Day approach. Although each of the exemplary schools used a different approach to communicate with parents, all of the schools attempted to anticipate parents' questions and to fully explain the planned innovation before major changes were made. (JG)

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*This monograph is one of a series of studies initiated by the Committee on Educational Practices of the National Association of Independent Schools. The help of the Sperry & Hutchinson Foundation in support of the Committee's work is gratefully acknowledged.*

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# *Schools Talk to Parents about the Integrated Day*

A Collection
by
EDWARD YEOMANS
*Associate Director of Academic Services*

EA 007 345

*Photographs by*
PATRICIA ADAMS
*Shady Hill School, Cambridge, Mass.*

October 1971
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

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# FOREWORD

CHANGE in education never takes place in isolation. There comes a time when our ways of teaching, the materials we use, the schedule and groupings, the very shape and style of the school, no longer serve our purposes. We begin to alter them – and then the outcry starts:

"It wasn't like that when I was in school!"

"They're not learning the fundamentals any more. I have to teach things that I never had to teach before."

"Thank goodness, my oldest child got through when things were stricter. The youngest never has homework any more."

Comments like these are familiar to teachers and heads of schools who are changing their classrooms toward the Integrated Day. They may have become convinced that such change must take place if children are to learn to their full capacity, yet without the understanding and support of other teachers and of parents, their plans could be frustrated and children would suffer.

It becomes most important, therefore, that schools communicate their plans, and the reasons for them, to the entire constituency in ways that are understandable and convincing. This has been done, in our judgment, by the schools whose statements appear in this booklet. Others could have been included just as well, but these were selected to represent a variety of approaches.

These schools have made an effort to anticipate questions and comparisons before major changes were made. They did this in various ways: Roeper School showed the new methods to be a means of reaching familiar goals, and pointed to classrooms that have already changed.

Sidwell Friends employed a group approach, quoting the experiences of several trusted teachers and connecting these with reports of experiences in English primary schools and in teachers' workshops.

Shady Hill asked two of its most experienced teachers to describe the reasons for their belief in the Integrated Day, the self-discipline that is required of a teacher, and the necessity for attention to academic standards.

Cambridge Friends looked favorably upon the changes that have taken place among the children who have experienced the Integrated Day, and described plans to extend these influences to an older group.

New Canaan raised the kinds of questions that parents want to have answered – and then proceeded to answer them.

Obviously, there are other devices for informing parents beyond those reproduced here. One of the best that I have seen took place at Roeper School on a winter Saturday. Parents came to the school early to see a film of an Integrated Day classroom and to raise questions about the procedures that were shown. Then came lunch and division into sign-up groups for a mini-workshop in the various rooms. Art activities were prepared in the studio, the math lab offered games and materials to be explored, the dance teacher took a group in movement-to-music, seminar groups were in the charge of other members of the faculty.

By the time this day was over, a large segment of the parent-body not only knew intellectually what was being planned, but they had experienced some of the same kinds of learning that were in store for their children. It was clear from their expressions and the things they said at the end of the day that the changes taking place at school would find, on the whole, a receptive parent-body.

All of the schools encourage classroom visits by parents and each has held a variety of discussion-meetings with small groups, grade-by-grade, or otherwise. Such efforts, and they have been many and varied, are greatly appreciated by the parent-body.

We are grateful to the five schools for permission to republish these bulletins, and we are hopeful that other schools will take equal pains to interpret their work.

EDWARD YEOMANS
*Associate Director of Academic Services*
National Association of Independent Schools

From Roeper City and Country School,
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

# LETTER TO PARENTS

February 15, 1971

Dear Parents:

A fresh wind has been blowing all over the country into the dusty fields of education. And it is blowing in our direction. For the first time new educational thoughts and methods have developed which really fit our philosophy. For years we have been looking for a structure which would help really carry out our goals and our commitment to children. The "nongraded" approach introduced a few years ago was a step in that direction. It was more flexible, more individualized than the traditional approach. Present educational thought and procedures as described in the last Parent Communication go beyond the concept of "nongraded." This letter will serve to explain the impact this new trend is having on the Lower and Intermediate School of RCCS.

**How does the concept of the "Open Classroom" relate to the philosophy of our school?**

Our philosophy has always been to help the individual to be truly himself, as well as to become a person who can successfully and humanly cope with the world both in the present and the unknown future. Such a person needs the opportunity to develop all aspects of the personality: physical, mental, intellectual, creative, and social, and integrate them all into one strong human being.

Inherent in the new educational structure is a recognition of the skills of human interaction with other more academic skills. These are built into the basic classroom structure as an important and integral element. This is in contrast to the traditional goal which left no room for social adjustment and put first priority on separate academic skills and their outside signs of recognition,

such as marks, promotion, etc. Along with this, it emphasized competition, while the new approach requires cooperation.

**What is the new concept of learning?**

a. Human beings have a biological urge to learn.
b. They learn by ACTIVELY reacting to their environment.
c. Each has his own unique method of incorporating stimuli.
d. There are no universal sequences, not even in math.
e. Methods of teaching may contradict and therefore inhibit methods of learning. Teaching therefore may be detrimental to the specific skill we want to teach while at the same time excluding other modes and directions for learning.

**What kind of educational structure is the result of this philosophy and theory of learning?**

There are, of course, different methods, but they all try to create an environment (environment as opposed to lesson) that is stimulating, varied, and designed to motivate the child to reach out and to explore. Traditional subject matter is replaced by environment. Stress is put on the relatedness of all areas in contrast to the separateness that existed before. Life experiences other than the classroom are also integrated. Teachers and parents continue to play an important part, but as stimulators, models, and guides.

The change in structure is reflected in the appearance of the classroom: Desks are replaced by tables. Children do not have assigned places, they move around at will, working with materials placed around the room. These materials are designed to allow the child to work independently in all different known subject matter areas, as well as others not specified. They include games of all sorts, listening posts, etc. There are group discussions, but teacher often works with individual child while others are working independently or together. There are different methods of keeping track of how children are progressing and occupying themselves — one is for each child to keep a journal, another is regular conferences with the teacher.

The more we learn about the "Open Classroom" approach, the more enthusiastic we have become. We therefore wish to inform you that the school is committed to introduce the structure of the "Open Classroom" in the Lower and Intermediate School. We are aware of the problems involved in any kind of change and will try to minimize it by careful preparation of all concerned. We will

begin by using the "Method of the Integrated Day" developed in Leicestershire, England, and used in many of the English public schools, as well as many in this country. Out of this our own method will develop.

The following is our plan: *Stage I,* the 3-year-old group will be eliminated. In the domes will be older 3-, 4-, 5-, and 6-year-olds. We may create groups which consist of a greater mixture of ages rather than separate age levels, since this is inherent also in the modern structure. Otherwise, there will be no essential changes in the domes since the structure has been an "Open Classroom" approach in the past already. *Stage III* (7- and 8-year-olds): The open classroom concept has been already introduced in three of the classrooms. It will be implemented in the whole building next fall. *Stage IV:* It will be implemented next year, at least for those moving in from Stage III, probably for all groups.

Teachers were informed of this commitment early in January. They have in general begun to inform themselves by reading the literature and visiting other schools; others attended a workshop. They will all visit the Academy of the Sacred Heart, where the approach has been introduced this year after a workshop was held there last July. R.C.C.S. will conduct a workshop during the month of July '71, together with Sacred Heart. It will be attended by most of our teachers, will be open to other interested educators ($250 and possible university credit). It will be directed by two headmistresses from England who have long worked in this system. One is in charge of an infant school (equivalent to lower elementary), the other, of a junior school (intermediate). They have conducted similar workshops in this country during the past years. They will be assisted by local specialists.

*For parents:* Literature abounds on the subject – most informative: Charles Silberman's *Crisis in the Classroom* (Random House, 1970).

This is just preliminary information. We will inform you of more detailed plans. In the meantime, we hope you will familiarize yourself with these exciting new ideas. We know it will not be easy to discard the old framework, concepts, and goals which we have taken for granted for so long. There will be doubts, anxiety, and concern. A continuous dialogue will be necessary among all of us. It is important that we try together to make this work for our children. We appreciate your help and involvement.

ANNEMARIE ROEPER
GEORGE ROEPER

From *The Newsletter*, May 1970
Sidwell Friends School, Washington, D.C.

# THE INTEGRATED DAY

## FROM THE HEADMASTER

*In response to requests for information about the "integrated day," Newsletter Editor Sally Hatch has compiled and edited the thoughts of several Sidwell Friends faculty members who have been exposed to the integrated day and have incorporated some of the methodology in their own classrooms.*

*The great interest aroused among teachers generally by this approach to teaching and learning compels our thoughtful attention. Whatever application the School makes of these ideas will, of course, be developed with extremely careful thought. As I read the contents of this issue, I was struck with how closely many ideas correspond to the basic concerns of Friends education and how closely the methodology parallels that of many of our teachers, as applied in their work with Sidwell Friends students for many, many years.*

*This full report by the Newsletter is a valuable service not only to our School family but also to the broader educational community.*

ROBERT L. SMITH, *Headmaster*
The Sidwell Friends School

Magazines

## *THE INTEGRATED DAY*

*"The best preparation for being a happy and useful man or woman is to live fully as a child."*

Plowden Report, 1967

**Introduction**
John F. Arnold, Principal
Middle School

JOHN Holt, the noted advocate of humanistic education, asks us to: "Observe a young child at play and see how much he learns solely through his own curiosity. Now try to imagine an environment that would be most likely to impede his intellectual growth. Can you think of anything much more stifling than to put him inside a little box (the classroom) that is inside a big box (the school), tell him to be quiet, sit still, and listen only to the person up front (the teacher)?"

The picture drawn by Mr. Holt presents a gross caricature of American education, to be sure. Yet caricatures magnify truth. Children are by nature active and questioning creatures; teachers are aware of this restlessness and the resultant lack of attention that often meet their best classroom efforts. They worry about the academic and emotional differences in their students, and how their daily needs may be met. They know too that self-discipline comes ultimately from within and is learned best when directly related to a task. Yet they find themselves spending much energy simply keeping order in the classroom or "performing" to hold the students' attention. To many teachers, smaller classes might help to lessen, though not alleviate, the problem. Unfortunately, however, they are not financially feasible.

Given this situation, then, is it strange that American educators are intrigued by reports of schools that have thirty to forty students per class, where children can move about, talk to each other (how do we learn verbal skills?), pursue many interests, and learn at a rapid pace? When they hear that the children are polite, that behavior problems are almost nonexistent, and that students often voluntarily stay in at recess to complete or further explore a task, they are downright fascinated.

With the explosion and implosion of knowledge, bells, schedules, and areas of discrete subject matter are making increasingly less sense in the modern world. Teachers and students alike feel fragmented. Just when interest is aroused, a bell rings and the moment is lost. Important field trips, movies, and special speakers are a nightmare to schedule because they cut into "other teachers' time slots." Many important matters, especially current ones, simply will not fit into a rigid schedule — and must be lost. Interrelationships of materials and approach are blurred.

In the complexity of contemporary life, therefore, the attention of many educators is turning increasingly to the process of education. The development of a different style of learning is needed wherein the primary focus is not based completely upon content but upon a fuller development of the child's perceptive powers, and of varied approaches toward learning, and of broad principles and tools for understanding. The "Integrated Day," an approach to learning currently in use in many British schools, has demonstrated its value in solving many of these learning problems. It holds much promise as a model for learning for all age levels, and, as such, it commands our careful attention.

## Part I *Evolution and Application in Britain*

Lynne G. Bisgyer, Science, Special Projects
Lower School

**How Children Learn**: Speaking about primary education, Christian Shiller, a British educator wrote:

"We are not held back by lack of knowledge. If even half of what is now clearly known were accepted with feeling and carried out with understanding by all the people concerned, the whole picture of our primary schools would change. Of course we have need to know more; but the major problem is to mediate enlightenment regarding what we know already."

As early as 1878, Froebel recognized that young children learned through games and play and did not distinguish between play and work. A school that capitalized upon these learning habits and directed its activities toward them would indeed be a garden in which children could grow; hence, the Kindergarten. Dewey, Susan Isaacs, Piaget, Inhelder, and Bruner added to the body of philosophy and theory regarding the child's way of knowing. Lacking was its application in the place designed for formal learning — the school.

In 1957, in England, various school authorities in Bristol, Nottingham, Leicestershire, and Oxfordshire slowly began to reorganize classrooms along the lines of an "integrated day." In Leicestershire, for example, the experiment proceeded in only two school districts. Not until 1960, when the School Committee was sufficiently satisfied, was the plan extended to one more area, and in 1964, to two more. By 1969, the entire county was using the new approach in its primary schools. The abolition of the 11-Plus exam (in which children of 11 take an exam that determines their eligibility for college preparatory schools) further stimulated interest in the new educational changes.

The Plowden Report, the national study of the British primary schools, published in 1967, concerned itself with the quality and methods of learning in the early school years. The primary school system consists of an infant school (children aged 5-7) and a junior school (ages 8-11). The Plowden Report suggested a number of administrative changes, but, most important, it scrutinized the quality of the teaching in most British schools. It concluded that the "best pupils" were the best fact-rememberers, that children were dependent upon the teacher for each step of their learning and thus never became "agents of their own learning." The report set out to aid the schools in the job of mediating what was already known about how children learn. The Plowden Committee publicly recognized the validity and success of Leicestershire's efforts in primary school education and the superior academic skills attained by its students.

**What Is the Integrated Day?**: The approach is variously named — integrated day, open classroom, free-flowing class. The integrated day rejects tracking and selection and permits a natural grouping of children, often of varying chronological ages. It rejects the authoritarian method of teaching — the imposition of teacher-schedule on the learning of children. It encourages, through the richness of the ordered environment of the classroom, a child-directed endeavor that leads to the natural authority of knowledge rather than the authority of teacher. Hence, once a problem is posed by the child or teacher, its solution is reached, not by rote, but by inductive learning. The integrated day offers a different kind of evaluation of a child's progress. Just as there are different stages of physical growth, so are there different stages of intellectual growth, and therefore, of learning and knowing. Just as the child cannot walk before he can sit, so the child must also make his way through the stages of intellectual growth. In the integrated classroom, the teacher is aware of the stages of learning and aids

each child's experiences so that he is able to discover and eventually to extrapolate his discovery to a new situation.

Created also is a turnabout in discipline. The integrated day approach to education creates a "caring" school – one deeply concerned to engage the child in the excitement of learning through his teacher, the other students, the materials, and his interests – instead of one that has to control by force, embarrassment, exclusion, or denegration.

**The Environment Created:** The child functions in an environment subtly structured by the teacher to encourage choices, decision-making, responsibility, interaction with his peers and his teacher, individual discovery, and creative approaches to staid academic studies. The classroom presented to him is abundant in materials and equipment, offers him numerous vehicles to "test out" an idea, and is rich in resources that encourage human excellence and individual expression.

No two classrooms are exactly alike, but all are child-centered. Regardless of the size or age of the school or the ages of the children, the atmosphere is informal, the walls are hung with children's work, and the floors and many tables are cluttered with projects in-the-making. The room is divided into areas or "centers" that pose particular problems and offer materials for their expression, solution, or extension.

The children move freely from center to center, working independently and at their own speeds. They talk to each other about their projects and discoveries, or to request help. They go to the teacher for guidance, for additional help, or to show her the results of their labors. They go from room to room, up and down the halls, in and out of doors, to use equipment or to visit another center. The atmosphere is relaxed, the children absorbed, and the classroom well used.

Many items of interest appear in the rooms: costumes for dramatics, lists, pets, games, charts, a Wendy House (playhouse), pictures, "found" objects; materials for art, music, science, reading, writing, math, spelling, dance, planting, building, digging, etc. Questions on cards stimulate the child's curiosity and imagination or suggest activities for the extension of an interest area.

Mathematics is enlivened by making numbers relate to a child's world. In the infant school years he counts and makes sets of objects; the abstraction of number alone comes later. He is encouraged to develop language about size and shape by handling and exploring objects. He classifies objects according to their

properties, thus introducing the language of sets and the mechanics of scientific classification. Cards with problems to be solved in math and the tactile materials to aid understanding may be the core of one center. Nearby, the math work may be displayed – a picture or graph of the child's making, or a model of a geometric figure is just as valid an end-product for math as a paper of sums.

Science centers around both the natural and physical sciences. The children keep animals and birds and observe their behavior. They write about their feelings toward these pets and often design experiments to test eating preferences, sleeping habits, and intelligence. The children keep records related to animals, draw pictures, and make models of them. The science curriculum integrates math, writing, poetry, art, and sculpture – truly a multi-media approach.

Just as the school environment is a source for study, so is the larger community, which the children investigate ecologically. All kinds of surveys of the community are made that bring into play numbers and math, science and sociology.

In one primary school, a nearby building excavation yielded many buried objects. Without further delay, the children began to gather the materials and examine them. Soon one child went off to check on how archaeologists learn about artifacts found on digs. Another was more interested in what had happened to the materials found in the dirt. He went on to find out and record how metals rust. A natural progression was made to the relationship between the children's excavation and an observed and recorded excavation of a Celtic funeral ship found at Sutton Hoo, England. Some of the children had seen the British Museum display of the artifacts. The children embarked upon a study of that excavation, drawing their own pictures of what they had seen and reconstructing a sword, shield, and jewelry from aluminum foil and cardboard. Other children investigated the Celts in an over-all history of England.

**The Role of Conversation**: Conversation between children is encouraged. How one views an object may be discussed at length with a neighbor. His opinion may be elicited. Perhaps an opinion poll will be the outgrowth of the initial conversation, expressed in a pictorial representation or graph. (Once again math has entered the realm of language, as has art.) Often the thrill of discovery brings a shout of joy and a rush to show one's friend.

**The Language, Writing, Reading Cycle**: Conversation leads directly

into reading, writing, and writing skills (spelling, grammar, punctuation) that are used together in each center and every area of endeavor. The pleasures of reading take precedence over competence during the earliest school years. In the infant school, the child uses games, books, and small group instruction to begin the decoding process. Some schools use the Initial Teaching Alphabet. All reading is individualized. The corridors of the buildings and corners of the rooms are filled with beautiful and engaging books on all reading levels, and many soft pillows. Some graded readers are used, but definitely are not the main source of reading material.

Children write and illustrate their own books, which they then use as their early readers. They make "new word" books and fill large-sized notebooks with pictures and writing about anything they choose – math, poetry, designs, stories. Those materials created by the child from his own experience or fantasy engage him enthusiastically in the reading process. The reading skill is thus introduced as a natural part of the uses of language – spoken, written, read. Emphasized are ways of encouraging pleasure in the integrated processes of speaking, reading, and communicating with the written word; of getting from the surface of the observed to the underlying logical sequence. A problem is formulated and then solved, using all the communication skills. What the child learns by this method, Jerome Bruner refers to as "competence, not particular performance."

**The Relationship with the Teacher**: Always, at the heart of the integrated day lies the relationship of the child to his teacher; in an integrated day classroom this relationship is altogether different. If one word were to be used to express the role of the teacher, it might well be "catalyst." He functions as a guide and consultant to groups and individuals. He helps the non-teaching adult aids make a meaningful contribution to the class. In the integrated day classroom, the teacher discovers the children's individual idiosyncrasies, becomes aware of their needs, and develops a relationship with each child akin to, but more objective than, a parent-child relationship. At the core of this relationship is mutual respect.

The teacher functions as an observer, much like the naturalist. At the same time, he is a recorder of the observed. If ever anyone needed "eyes in the back of his head" the teacher of an integrated day does – and often appears to have them! He is constantly interacting with a child, sometimes by only a touch or an approving nod or smile. He must be ready to ask the next

question, to suggest a possible next step, and to leave to the child the delight of discovering the answer.

**The Check-ups:** Much time is spent in individual conferences, when the teacher and the child evaluate the child's work and plot the course of his future studies. The values are high and the teacher's comments reflect them. His remarks cannot be misconstrued by the child; he speaks to him privately, and because of their mutual relationship, the child willingly responds. Many records of these evaluations are kept. If a child requires additional work in a particular area, he is assigned it during his conference. Conveyed to the child, though not in words, is the recognition that the teacher's objective is to assist him to greater understanding and competence through learning. In the end, the goals of the child's education always *remain his own.*

Terry Borton, author of *Reach, Touch and Teach: Student Concerns and Process Education* has posed the question, "What is left when school is forgotten?" His answer is, "The process of an educated mind — the ways of gathering, evaluating, and acting upon information."

## Part II *Teacher-Training*

Major contributors to the success of the integrated day in Leicestershire County, England, have been frequent in-service programs and workshops for teachers, where exchanges of ideas and practical help have been readily available. An Open classroom is not an easy ship to steer; teachers' capacities — physical, emotional; mental, and professional — can be stretched to the maximum. American schools interested in the integrated day are widely scattered; concerted effort is necessary to give teachers information and training. In the Washington area, a growing number of public and private institutions are investigating the advantages of this concept of individualized education.

In 1968, the National Association of Independent Schools sponsored a workshop on the integrated day at Shady Hill School in Cambridge, Mass. Last summer, it sponsored four more workshops, one of which was held at Potomac School. Run by Joan French and Mrs. Ann Fryer, both heads of integrated-day schools in Leicestershire, England, it drew fifty teachers from the Washington area. Five Sidwell Friends faculty members attended: Miss Elizabeth Dougherty (Grade 1), Mrs. Daniel L. Harbour (Assistant, Grade 2), Miss Karen Kalish (Grade 1x), Mrs. Orm W.

Ketcham (Head Teacher, Kindergarten Department), and Mrs. Jay L. Bisgyer (Science, Lower School), who was on the science staff of the workshop.

**Miss Dougherty comments on the program:**

> To be explored during the month were the discoveries made by the participants as they experienced a guided, integrated approach to learning in four academic areas: math, music, science, and art. To be emphasized was our growth as individuals. Each week's activities (and our own development) evolved consecutively from the one which preceded it. The first week, everyone spent a day at each of the four "centers." Lots of instruction was given about the materials to be used and, with encouragement to use initiative to explore all their possibilities, teachers were told to "see what you can do." Staff members acted primarily as resource teachers. Needless to say, one became very aware of one's strengths and weaknesses – and one's inhibitions! At first, frequently heard was, 'Is this all right? Is this want you want?' – echoes from our own classrooms! The reply, always – "What do you think? Whatever you want." Having removed that old crutch – give back to the teacher what one believes he wants to hear – participants were forced to open up and do some independent thinking and learning.
>
> The results were quite exciting. We opened up as individuals, delighted with our freedom to create and develop an idea in any area for as long as we wished – no interruptions, no bells – using any tool we needed. People began to "learn how to learn." The push to discover came more and more from within each individual as he gained in self-confidence. Nothing was right or wrong.
>
> The second week, a field trip to Scientists Cliffs on Chesapeake Bay gave us a chance to apply new-found abilities to the world at large. We explored the area, collected fossils and objects from the shore, soaked up the sun, and tried to sharpen our perceptive powers. The remainder of the week was spent at school, working on projects stimulated by the trip. We took a few days to realize that we had objects before us from which we could learn in depth. Some of the old habits had not quite faded away. Again one heard, "What do you want us to do with it?" Miss French and Mrs. Fryer expressed concern about this holding back. After some experimenting, however, ideas began to come, and it became obvious to us what could be done with the wealth of materials we had collected. We filled two display rooms with our artistic and scientific efforts!
>
> We were experienced enough by the third week to examine with understanding how the integrated day might be applied to our own classrooms. General techniques and materials, language arts, math, reading, and pupil evaluation were discussed in groups and individually with Mrs. Fryer and Miss French. Mr. Robert Alexander of Arena Stage conducted a two-day workshop on nonverbal communication and methods used successfully in the theatre to encourage self-confidence, expression, and individual

perception. Roy Illsley, headmaster of Battling Brook School, Leicester, came from New York to speak about the philosophy and methods of the integrated day.

The final week was devoted to summarizing what we had learned. During the month, the group became unusually well knit. Frequent periods of relaxed conversation about ideas, methods, and philosophies, and a daily "Think Session," during which one was not allowed to ride along on or argue about another's statement, brought forth some very worthwhile opinions. Mrs. Fryer and Miss French stressed that, basically, an integrated day is meant to expand who one is and reinforce what one does.

In general, we teachers came away feeling a new openness. Some of the unnecessary old pressures had gone, to be replaced with an eagerness to try this new "beginning." To be sure, the workshop's greatest value lay in the teacher's gradual awareness of just exactly what an integrated day is. Once he has experienced the increased self-confidence and joy to be gained from learning for himself in his own unique way, he will be forever on his guard against stifling the individuality of his pupils. He will have brought down a mountain of work and responsibility upon his head, but with the encouragement of his colleagues, parents, and educators at large, his labors will give children freedom to use their initiative to understand, and through their understanding, to gain knowledge.

At Sidwell Friends, speakers, films, meetings, literature, and opportunities to visit other schools have been available to faculty members. Principals Peter Rice and John Arnold, and Mrs. Jay L. Bisgyer (Science, Lower School) visited integrated day schools in England this winter and last spring. Mrs. L. W. Wadsworth (Language Arts, Middle School) is currently apprenticing for six weeks in Leicester. On May 1, Lower and Middle School faculties met with teachers from Baltimore and Virginia Beach Friends Schools for an all-day workshop on the integrated day conducted by Mrs. Ann Bremer of The Parkway School, Philadelphia. In July, Sidwell will again send four Lower School teachers to the NAIS-sponsored workshop, to be held at Beauvoir School. Miss Karen Kalish (Grade 1x), Mrs. Ellis O. Jones (Grade 5a), and James Vance (Grade 6c) will teach in integrated-day schools in England during the summer.

**Part III** *Variations of the Integrated Day in the Lower School*

**Transition-Kindergarten Department:** Several classes are experimenting with some of the techniques of the integrated day. A family class (under the guidance of Mrs. Orm W. Ketcham, Head Teacher) of twenty-four children from kindergarten, transition,

and first grade began in April for three one-week periods. Two or three children come to this class from kindergarten for two or three days a week; a group of first-graders come for four mornings each week.

The room is divided by bookcases and tables into centers, where the children work independently at various tasks. The art area contains painting, drawing, and coloring materials. The language arts center has problem cards, the Key Lab Spelling Program, and reading and writing skill-builders. At the listening center, the children may lie on soft pillows while they use ear phones to listen to recorded music and stories. They talk and read books (or pictures) onto a tape recorder. In the secluded library area are more soft pillows and mats. A Wendy House, with a bed, table, and chairs, is in one corner of the room. A sand table is set up for weighing and measuring. The "math" center contains a scale, equipment for balancing and weighing, and number materials.

The presence of first grade children in this family class is enormously beneficial, both for the 7-year-olds and for the younger children. Mrs. Ketcham says that "first-graders grow about a foot as they enter the door. Here is their chance to be all-wise, all-knowing; to assume an instant position of leadership." These children reinforce their skills when they perform experiments, play games, read, and write stories with ease. The younger children come to them often for companionship and help and use these children as "teachers in learning."

The key to the family class is the communication center – a box on a small table in which are kept the children's folders containing their recorded observations and completed papers. Here also are their booklets in which they write words and stories and messages to Mrs. Ketcham, and where they check to find her messages to them.

The remaining transition students and Mrs. Brooks, Mrs. Alderfer, and Mrs. Cassarino alternate freely between centers set up in the other classrooms. Mrs. Cassarino's room has the reading-language arts and math centers (workbooks, phonics, sight work, reading books, counting games and equipment, sets and patterns). An art center, a block and construction area, weaving and stitchery, science experiments, pre-reading games and other similar materials, exercises in perception, and tangram puzzles are in Mrs. Alderfer's rooms.

Several comparative observations may be made from this short experiment: The teacher is faced with a great deal of advance – and spur-of-the-moment – planning to run an integrated day class

successfully; a better chance exists during the day for a teacher to work individually with each child; children often help each other to learn; they appear more relaxed in this classroom situation. The potential of the integrated day seems great; to be emphasized, however, is the necessity for a longer period of time for its accurate evaluations.

**First Grade:** Both first grades use aspects of the integrated day. **Karen Kalish (Grade 1x) speaks about her open classroom:**

> An observer's first glimpse of my classroom leaves him startled and a little apprehensive. I expect the noise (conversation), the rushing around (moving from center to center), the clutter (tables, an airport, easels, a house, a store – no desks!) and, above all, all that *playing* are the principal causes of this reaction. Since most of us spend sixteen to twenty years learning in a highly structured classroom situation, to walk into a group of children functioning in an integrated-day milieu can be upsetting. If my observer will spend the morning, or better yet, all day, I think he will begin to see patterns of order and purpose in the children's activities.
>
> Tables, bookcases, and easels form movable walls that, at the moment, divide the room into many centers: handwriting, language arts, math, art and painting, listening, science, building, games, music, Wendy House, tape recorder. A cosy library is under the stairs in the hall. The walls are filled with the children's work – pictures, measurement lists, project designs, and experiments, graphs, objects made at home, stories, new words, and a 'reading train' (each car names a book read by a child) that already reaches around three sides of the room high on the wall. Few standardized tests are used. Shelves are crammed with *National Geographics*, a worn encyclopedia, math games, and manipulative materials, SRA – and books, books, books! Signs with activity suggestions and job lists, plants, a fish tank, and a gerbil cage receive much attention. The flow of movement is fairly constant. The children sit in chairs, at tables, on the floor, at the piano, coloring, painting, cutting, reading in the library building, writing on the blackboard, planting seeds, and experimenting with batteries and magnets, talking on the tape recorder, conversing with their peers or with me or my assistant, Susan Wheeler.
>
> I enforce only four classroom rules: clean an area before leaving it, no destroying another child's project or property, no running, no interrupting. The feeling of respect and trust generated by these rules and by the freedom inherent in the integrated day gives the children the confidence to make their own activity choices and behavior decisions.
>
> Most of the children are drawn to the room as soon as they get to school, rather than playing outside until the first bell. At most, we are together as a group only twice a day – once during the morning to introduce anything new in the room, to go over the

day's plans, or to issue reminders; again in the afternoon for a story and clean-up. The children keep clean-up jobs for two weeks. They are aware of their responsibility for an orderly room. In between these times, the children are free to follow their interests and choose their academic activities.

Reading is learned in various ways. Instead of using textbooks and reading in groups, each child dictates to me his story about any subject. He then reads this story to me. Formal instruction in phonics teaches beginning consonants, consonant blends, and the most frequently used vowel sounds. Games like "Ug, the Bug" and "I Spy" help to reinforce these sounds. SRA, a program in which each child reads a story, writes and checks his answers, and keeps a record of his own progress, allows him to read at his own rate and remain on his *own* level at all times. The children play word-recognition games and read the signs on the walls. They hear stories on tapes and records that they may follow in books. They read to and with each other, learning to read with expression and helped with new words by better readers.

Manipulating any material, be it a pencil, paint, clay, or blocks, helps each child indirectly to improve his handwriting. Once a week the class has a Writing Derby. Earlier this year, I would set the timer for fifteen minutes and ask the chilren to WRITE – about anything that came to mind. It must be words and sentences, and coherent. The class was divided into teams, and the winning team was the one that wrote the most words. Recently however, we have disbanded the teams. The children were unwilling to stop after fifteen minutes and have been writing for thirty to fifty minutes! The interest in the Derby is intense; the children almost quiver with excitement. Individual word count goes up every week, which makes each child proud. A newspaper is published once a week. Written and illustrated by the children, it tells about the great events of our class and its members.

Concepts of mathematics are learned through several methods. Measurement is taught with rulers and nondecimated objects – how many chairs long is the room? How many hands wide is the blackboard? Baking introduces the children to cups, pints, tablespoons, etc. Cuisinaire rods, blocks in ten colors and sizes, teach number value. Bingo aids recognition of numbers. Flash cards heighten quick recall. A game called "Zooks" teaches place value, and one called "Challenge" pits the children against each other to see who can do the problem faster. They are even able to add a column of four digit numbers.

"Aha, competiton!" my observer cries. Yes, several of the games are competitive, but usually the faster child teaches the slower one (and sometimes better than I), and often the slower child wins the next time.

The children are magnificent! They play, work, and talk to each other. Instead of the neat, self-contained, divisive force of desks, the tables and the freedom of the class have allowed children to be together. In this classroom, emotional and intellec-

tual bonds bloom and flourish. As Piaget's studies show, children go through learning stages. Give a child time, and he will get to everything in the classroom.

Little or no discipline problems occur because the children follow their *own* interests when, where, and how they wish, and do not suffer the imposition of rigid schedules and set tasks.

Parents worry about how children with problems will function in this free atmosphere. I believe that many adults place children in categories created by adults. Patterns of behavior take on new light in an open class. For instance, the shy child is more able to find children with whom he can communicate, be it coloring or reading together, and is drawn out of himself. The slow child, when allowed to progress at his own rate, is only slow in certain areas relative to the other members of the class; he does not keep anyone else back and is often motivated in areas in which other children have little interest. A child said to have little self-control puts all of his energy into an activity that interests him and is in complete control. The bright child is allowed to progress at his own rate and is an extra added attraction if he wants to help others (helping his own communicative growth as well, and learning to get along with other children in the process). I believe that every child is highly motivated: give him an interest that he enjoys and in which he can become involved and his motivation has no bounds. The child who is unable to work by himself works with other children. As that child becomes comfortable in and with the class, the day arrives when he finds something he wants to do that, perhaps, no one else is doing, and he becomes willing to "go it alone." Every child has a place in the integrated day.

I do not see myself as a teacher in the traditional sense. I stand in front of my class only when the children are standing. I strive to create an informal, warm, relaxed atmosphere. If the children sit, then I, too, sit; if they are on the floor, then I, too, am on the floor. My role is that of a channeler. I try to spot areas in which children need help. Areas that are being avoided require subtle inducement in order to bring a child back. I can tell a student to do something over and over, but unless he wants to, he will get nothing out of it; he merely performs a task for me. I can gather together students and ask them to identify number cards if I think some children need work in number-recognition. But – if they played Bingo? The results would be the same, but the game tickles and holds their interest and is much more fun.

The integrated day is far more personal than the structured, traditional day. During some part of the day I relate to each child as an *individual*, whose thoughts, feelings, and emotions are similar to mine. Gone is the sea of upturned faces and the collective feelings that go undiscovered and do not apply to any one child. Much more time is needed to plan an integrated day than a traditional classroom. For me, however, the integrated day is easier because I have more fun. Planning for a formal classroom can be boring and unspontaneous; the integrated day calls for all the creativity one can muster.

> Our class remains a "variation" of the integrated day because our work is interrupted by bells marking 35-minute periods. The ideal is no bells – interruptions – at all. Children do not like to be interrupted any more than do adults. To take advantage of special teachers (art, music, library, science, gym), the class must adhere to the bells. This problem, with planning, ideally should be solved so that these subjects are not isolated from our day but are integrated into all phases of study where they rightfully belong.
>
> Through the powers of concentration that grow from involvement, everyone is learning and doing. I play chess with a boy at a table. The children play with blocks to build an airport, they also learn about community helpers and unconsciously use mathematical concepts to fit blocks and shapes within a given area. The children play with the cash register and learn about money value. The girls learn about addition and subtraction while they buy at the "store" and make change. Most important, all the children are learning to be with each other, to live and work with each other, which, after all, is what life is all about!

**Third and Fourth Grades:** If children have already had two or three years in a traditional classroom, a period of adjustment is usually necessary before they can function to good advantage in the open class. They seem to mistrust their own abilities to assume a responsibility for independent learning and need much encouragement. In this situation, the teacher will start with a structured classroom and let the integrated day evolve directly from it. Slowly, and probably within only one academic area, she encourages her students to work on their own. When she feels they can accept this responsibility, she individualizes learning in other areas.

In a third grade classroom, the desks are replaced by tables. The teaching is primarily structured, with certain academic areas incorporating learning-center techniques. SRA math and reading and the Macmillan Reading Spectrum are geared to individual levels of achievement. The teacher is free to modify her program along either traditional or integrated lines, depending upon the mood of the class, the need of a child, or the nature of her subject matter.

Fourth grade teachers also stress that although team-teaching readily fits into an integrated day, occasions arise that demand a return to a structured approach – "We play it by ear."

The rooms are divided into centers: language arts, music, logic and math, social studies, and reading. Numerous signs posted around the room instruct or remind children about academic responsibilities. Students finish work in one center before moving

on to another and go to teachers at a central table for help.

This integrated day remains controlled – youngsters have freedom within subject areas. They work at their own speeds and on their own levels. If a child wanders aimlessly, teachers bring him back to a center. The atmosphere of the class is relaxed. Some children converse with each other about their studies; most work diligently at their tasks.

**Part IV** *General Observations*
*Application of the Integrated Day to Older Children*
John Arnold, Principal
Middle School

Besides the junior schools, two other types of public schools for children of middle school ages exist in England: middle schools (children aged 10-13) and comprehensive high schools (children aged 11-18). Some middle schools, new phenomena in Britain and still few in number, use an integrated day similar to the junior school described earlier. Other middle schools, as well as the lower grades of the comprehensive high schools, have a different kind of integrated day. A team of teachers, each a specialist, plans activities for students in its group. Teachers may work together or separately. Students may move from room to room or remain stationary. In all cases, a rich learning environment is provided; the teaching is project-centered; numerous learning choices are given; and movement and conversation are encouraged.

**The Role of the Teacher**: Essential to an integrated day with its classroom brimming over with children, each of whom is independently pursuing his studies at his own rate, is the teacher's ability to stimulate and help every child often enough to prevent academic problems from going undetected for too long a time. One of the great advantages of the integrated day is that it removes the teacher from his old role of entertainer and chief motivator. The learning environment itself and the other children, busily pursuing their interests, discussing topics and helping each other, provide much of the stimulation. Moreover, because no one person is the constant focus of attention, extensive use of para-professionals (student teachers, parents, older students) can be made. The teacher of course gives direction by the manner in which the room is set up and in the choice of materials presented. Because the teacher does not spend most of his time lecturing, he may work closely with individuals and small groups. In a classroom of thirty-six children, for example, if he works with groups

of three, he can spend a half hour per day per group – certainly more attention than most students receive in a traditional room. Interestingly enough, many British teachers feel they would not like a class with fewer than 25 children – it would not provide enough interaction. Good record-keeping in terms of achievement, behavior, and diagnosis is an absolute necessity for the teacher.

**The Traditional Teacher and the Integrated Day:** Numerous teachers, especially those influenced by writings of John Holt, Paul Goodman, Jonathan Kozol, *et al.*, are eager to try an integrated-day approach. Because of the program's intrinsic merit, other teachers will want to try aspects of it. In England, many highly structured teachers have changed to open classrooms. They were slow to be persuaded but, once determined to make the change, put the same careful planning and concern for detail into the new process that once was evident in their traditional approach. In fact, the best open classroom I saw in England was that of a woman who had taught for thirty years in traditional fashion.

It must be pointed out that no teacher should be, or can be, made to teach in a style he dislikes. Any attempts to force such change are bound to be counterproductive. In no case should teachers throw out techniques that are working well unless they are convinced others are better. The integrated day developed pragmatically and is not a doctrinaire method. The best teachers use parts of any approach that are beneficial to students. A period of training and very careful planning are prerequisites for anyone implementing an open classroom.

**Discipline:** Few discipline problems exist in the integrated day classroom. Most behavior problems are a result of fear of failure, personal animosity, or boredom. In the well-run schools – and I only saw one of 15 that was not – the program is related to the needs, interests, and levels of achievement of the children. As a result, students experience a feeling of solid accomplishment and like school.

Roy Illsley, headmaster of Battling Brook School in Leicestershire, England, and a highly articulate spokesman for the integrated day, has but two rules: students may not prevent another student from learning, and they may not willfully destroy or steal property. Punishment often consists of a student having to sit in Mr. Illsley's office until he asks for the *privilege* of being able to learn again. In no sense are these British schools "permissive." If the noise level is too loud, children are told to "tone it down." If

they are rude or disruptive they are told to "cut it out" in no uncertain terms. The students I saw are exceptionally well mannered, kind to each other, respectful to teachers, and friendly to visitors. They do various types of work about the school, like setting up the lunch room, serving food, and bringing tea to their teachers. Even the 5- and 6-year-olds are very responsible about cleaning up and putting away supplies at the end of the day. No doubt some of this behavior can be attributed to cultural differences and British child-rearing practices. But the approach worked equally well in the inner city of London as in the upper middle class suburban areas. Similar results can be seen in schools that are using open classrooms in the United States.

**The Growth of Self-Esteem:** Competition with other students is played down purposefully; competition with oneself is encouraged. As in the junior school, instead of "grading" papers, a teacher discusses a student's work with him, complimenting or pointing out errors, explaining and making further assignments. Report cards take the form of comments.

Absence of formal grading assuredly does not mean an absence of standards. Frequently, remarks such as, "You can do better," and "Is that your best effort?" can be heard from the teacher. Exemplary work is posted for all to see. Great care is taken to ensure that the student does not feel himself to be a failure. This care can be sensed in the classrooms, which are remarkably free of tension.

Two incidents I saw indicate the attitude this noncompetitive atmosphere creates. A 10-year-old, holding a 5-year-old by the hand, said "Look, Mr. Illsley, see what fine writing Jimmy has done!" The younger lad, of course, beamed at this praise for his early scrawling. A 7-year-old said of an 11-year-old, "When I get old like George, I'm going to paint like him."

**The Adaptability of Children:** Children who have been educated formally can move successfully into an open classroom after some initial difficulty. In general, the higher the grade level, the longer the period of adjustment. At first, students are likely to do a lot of testing of limits, skipping from task to task without involvement, and feel a bit insecure – all natural responses of an intelligent organism attempting to adapt to a new environment. If there is one quality that children possess it is flexibility. A skillful, well-organized teacher with support from his colleagues can well cope with these difficulties. Firmness, patience, and a belief in his approach are essential.

The transition to an open classroom, even with older students, should be made gradually. At first, at each center, a limited number of activity choices should be offered with specific goals established. As the students master independent study, more material and choices are offered. Another tack is to try an interest-center approach for several periods a day, gradually increasing the time. This transition from traditional to open classroom has been accomplished successfully in numerous schools in the United States.

Hard facts are almost nonexistent about what happens to a student when he later enters a formal institution. The type and quality of his new school will have some influence upon his success. Teachers felt that, in general, students at first seemed to lack an orderly, organized approach to their studies. Teachers next discovered that once students accepted the more rigid schedule, they demonstrated that they knew how to think, use resource materials, and get the facts; that they had greater self-discipline, more flexible minds, and were more dedicated to learning than students educated in a traditional classroom.

**Learning Problems:** The integrated day is not a panacea; problems will always exist regardless of procedure. The integrated day does maximize options for a teacher and for the student at any age level. Any number of methods can be used simultaneously in an open classroom. If the student cannot handle the freedom offered, the teacher can always seat him at a desk and say, "Do this, this, this, and this." Gradually, choices can be given him with the hope of eventually working him back into the "main stream." Slow or bright students often thrive in an open classroom because here, for once, they can go at their own speed without undue pressure. As for the unmotivated children, the integrated day seems ideally suited, for reasons cited earlier, to capture their interest and build upon their enthusiasm, and then to develop their skills.

**The Role of the Arts in the Integrated Day:** The arts play a major role in every integrated-day classroom, regardless of the ages of the children. Painting, pottery, sculpting, weaving, stitchery, and model-building abound. The Orff musical instruments are available in many rooms; sometimes specialists in the method teach music classes. All-class drama activities or small-group improvisations, related to areas of study, are continuously woven into the life of the classroom. Particularly interesting is the teaching of movement, which is a combination of modern dance, physical education, and drama. Clad in underwear, boys and girls move to

instruction ("Be quick, take up a small space, move with your weight centered anywhere except your feet," etc.) or music, developing a sense of their bodies and their relationships to the immediate environment.

The visual impact of the integrated-day classroom, at all grade levels, is overwhelming. Visitors are unanimous in stating that the art work is far superior to that in American schools, even though the British children are usually not taught by art specialists. Art work of extremely high calibre was exhibited in a middle school class taught by a former physical education teacher with no art training.

What accounts for this situation? First and foremost, the whole attitude of the integrated-day school toward the arts is different. They are looked upon as *essential* to the development of a whole human being because they educate the child's visual, tactile, and kinesthetic senses, develop his imagination and awareness, and increase his compassion and sense of self worth. The arts are not regarded as frills, tacked on to the "real curriculum" to provide emotional release, nor are they viewed in terms of vocational training. When a teacher reviews a child's progress, he not only asks, "Has he done any math this week?" but also "Has he done any art?"

Second, through a variety of activities, children are taught to *perceive*. In many rooms, all sorts of objects like pine cones, buckeyes, acorns, etc., are displayed. Children are asked, "How are these objects alike? How do they differ?" Color charts with subtle differences in shade are posted. Numerous visual perception games are presented, and sometimes children invent their own. Because students have been taught to *see*, many learn to paint beautifully. The descriptive aspects of their creative and expository writing are also of very high quality.

**Special Academic Concerns:** The more advanced knowledge necessary for middle school children will limit an integrated day to a certain extent. As children grow older, they become better able to handle abstract knowledge and are less dependent upon the concrete. Certain areas may now be studied in depth, which requires the guidance of special teachers. The notions of integrating and interrelating academic disciplines, a choice of tasks, and the social atmosphere of the integrated day are still valid. Some type of team-teaching by specialists may be a fruitful approach for older children.

Two areas, laboratory science and foreign languages, present special problems. If a science lab is in close physical proximity to

the classroom, the usual "flow" of the integrated day is not disturbed. Unless homeroom teachers can speak a foreign language (as many British teachers can), a special "class" seems necessary. Even so, ways can be found to relate it to the rest of the curriculum, perhaps by incorporating it into a study of the literature, art, and history of a country.

What about spelling, grammar, multiplication tables, and other "drill" subjects? A distinction needs to be made between practice and busy work. The former develops a skill; the latter only keeps students occupied. Integrated-day rooms consciously set up practice areas. No teacher is needed at these centers. Games and various incentives help the student master some not-so-exciting but worthwhile exercises. While drill-type activities are not the backbone of an open classroom, the skilled teacher ensures that they are sufficiently mastered.

**Standardized Test Scores:** At this time in Britain, no reliable statistical comparison of standardized test scores has been made between children taught by traditional methods and those taught in the integrated day. British primary schools do not make such extensive use of standardized tests as American schools. Children are not tested so often; frequently they are tested anonymously. British educators use standardized tests primarily as rough indicators of the effectiveness of the curriculum within their own schools rather than as a measure of the capabilities of the student.

The Plowden Committee believes that "externally imposed attainment tests should be abandoned." It cites several dangers in these examinations: standardized tests are heavily based upon rote learning. Teachers tend to prepare their students for the tests and, therefore, can place undue emphasis upon this preparation within their curriculum. The more special preparation given to a student, the more invalid the test results. Standardized tests do not measure a student's understanding, inventiveness, or originality.

Of greater value, the Committee believes, are tests that allow the student "freedom of response." The teacher's familiarity with his student offers a more accurate evaluation of achievement potential, attitude toward learning, and the external and internal factors that affect motivation. Of greater influence upon the primary curriculum should be follow-up reports of students' progress from their secondary schools.

Because the open classroom is not test-oriented, these students have little standardized test sophistication. The Plowden Report states that integrated-day children actually develop superior academic skills, particularly in mathematical reasoning, reading com-

prehension, and written expression.

**Current Individualized Approaches in Middle School:** In mathematics, students in five classrooms (Grades 5, 6, and 8) proceed at their own speed. If tests indicate they have attained a specified level of mastery (85% or 90%), they proceed to the next unit. Teachers work with individuals or with small groups. In fifth grade, math students participate weekly in a math workshop, which features concrete learning materials and math games.

In social studies, students frequently divide into small groups for project work or do individual research, using the library extensively. One sixth grade makes contracts with its teacher to study and report on topics of individual interest.

Science in all grades is highly individualized and project-centered. Equipment is set up, and a wide choice of experiments is offered for investigation and report.

Seventh and eighth grade English and study skill classes can also break into groups and do project-type work. From time to time in the various disciplines, interest centers will appear. Several fifth and sixth grade rooms occasionally have revolving groups which work simultaneously on math, social studies, and languages.

**Future Plans for the Integrated Day in Middle School:** No master plan exists for the integrated day. As teachers show an interest in it, they are encouraged to implement it as they see fit.

At this writing, it appears that next year there will be an open classroom in each of grades five and six, and possibly an integrated history-English-art program in grade seven or eight.

The integrated day, it must be emphasized again is not a "system," but a term applied to an approach to education and a wide variety of methods. Certainly we cannot adopt, *in toto*, any methodology, especially one from abroad. Basic differences exist between Britain and America, and every institution must adapt innovations to its own style and character. However, I am greatly enthusiastic about the integrated day. I find it to be the best "model" that I have encountered. Because of its humaneness, its development of initiative and responsibility, and its concern for the individual, it seems peculiarly suited to a Quaker school.

## Part V *Opportunities for Individualized Learning in the Upper School*

Both relevant and enlightening to a discussion of the integrated day are a review and evaluation of current, and in some cases

long-standing, time-honored programs that allow students to progress under the guidance of their own incentive, ability, and sense of responsibility. A number of these programs, highly regarded by both students and faculty, permit able students to achieve more advanced levels of learning and to polish their research and writing skills. All disciplines except English have classes mixed by grade – a built-in system to permit more flexibility in scheduling and a head start for younger students gifted in a particular area. In languages and mathematics, students often are moved during the year. "We don't allow able students to sit marking time," says Lloyd Kayhart, College Guidance director. "We move them right up to a harder class. We also move them to an easier class, by the way, if they are obviously unable to keep up."

Particularly interesting are these programs, which permit extensive independent work: Biology, American Studies, TEMAC (Algebra I, II and Plane Geometry), Junior English Research Paper, and Senior Projects.

Next year, seniors will be offered a choice of one of fourteen seminars, each with four to eight students and a faculty director who will keep the seminar on course. These students will work individually on some aspect of the seminar topic. Once or twice a week, they will meet and put together their research and instruct and learn from each other. To a major extent, these seminars will replace the current independent study projects for seniors. Since they will serve as the students' official fourth major subject, they should be chosen in the area of greatest interest. Sample offerings: great problems in mathematics, economics, Chinese history, contemporary problems, art, physics.

In these independent study programs, students who do not perform up to minimal standards may lose credit for the course. Frequent supervisory progress checks are set up to avoid this possibility.

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From *Shady Hill News*, Fall 1970
Shady Hill School, Cambridge, Massachusetts

# LIVE AND LEARN

*by* JANE PRESCOTT

THOSE of you who came to visit a classroom at Shady Hill several years ago could have expected to find the familiar set of desks and chairs facing the blackboard, the teacher in front of the room speaking to the whole class, and children of the same age working or listening with varying degrees of attention and involvement. Since that time a new movement in education has been launched in America which stems from some exceptional work being carried out in many British schools. The changes being undertaken in our school and by our teachers over the past three years are directly traceable to this movement and our growing interest in it. Today when entering some of our lower school classrooms you may be surprised at the change in atmosphere, as well as in classroom set-up. You may not find the teacher right away, as she could be out of sight, sitting on the rug in the reading corner playing "Consonant Lotto" with a small group of children. Some desks you may find, but they will be pushed together at angles to form tables or large places to exhibit work or to hold projects. You may wonder which is the front of the class and, as you stand musing on this, a group of children in aprons will sweep by you, bearing paints and brushes to the hall to work on their mural. If you look carefully, you will see all the children involved in some purposeful activity. The variety of activity and options

may astonish you. It might seem overwhelming, but if you stay long enough, you will discover that these children, though using personal initiative and choice, are making wise decisions for themselves. What you won't see is that the background for this kind of self-discipline and responsibility has been carefully built by the teacher through discussions with the children and the preparation of a stimulating, responsive environment. The creation and nurture of this kind of environment is what I would like to discuss in this article.

Today one can pick up many books and magazine articles in America which attempt to explain the "new approach" to teaching. It is called by different names which all mean an emphasis on individualized teaching, self-directed work, real experiences in a constantly shifting environment rich in materials which promote learning, and the freedom and time to choose and explore for oneself.

At Shady Hill our recent changes in approach to teaching have come in response to some serious questioning on the part of our teachers about the optimum conditions for learning. There have always been teachers in our school with gifts to inspire and enthusiasms to excite. These teachers have held to ideals in education which combined the best in whatever was innovative or traditional with academic excellence. One of these teachers, Kathleen Raoul, says "I had read of the schools of Leicestershire (England). I had seen pictures of them but, until I walked almost straight from the plane into my first Infant School, I didn't quite believe that little children could make big decisions about their own education; that teachers could help them learn without teaching them." Kathleen goes on to describe her visit in glowing terms.[1] She returned to Shady Hill after that summer visit in 1967 and went right to work to build into her curriculum with first-graders some of the freedom of movement and activity, some of the individualized teaching she had seen working so successfully in English schools. It was from this beginning that the ripple effect in our school began. The time for this idea was ripe and is now gaining force, as can be seen by its spread among schools, both private and public, around our country. But to return to our story: Kathleen's job was not easy. She was trying to implement what was best of what she had seen and continue her fine teaching of central subject and reading to twenty 6-year-olds. Consent and blessings from the school had been given, and explanations to parents were most cooperatively received. The difficulties of

[1] See footnotes at end of article.

working this way with one age group, of feeling "alone" in one's struggles, and the insecurity brought on by not always feeling successful and rewarded would be hard on the best of us. Yet, as with all powerful ideas, this one gained interest and strength as the year progressed. Those of us who had long been wanting to break the bounds of homogeneous age grouping and rigid scheduling, and find ways to be more free and creative in our teaching, listened to Kathleen, read Joseph Featherstone[2] and the Plowden Report,[3] saw slides of English schools taken by Edward Yeomans (NAIS Associate Director of Academic Services), and talked and thought and planned.

We were convinced that to bring this reform, or change, to our school needed slow, careful, responsible work. Our director, Mr. Segar, was willing to plan with us, so as 1968 began, we sat down to add to the beginning which Kathleen had made. There was no magic formula, no package plan. It became obvious that small moves would be apt to be most successful. Other schools might make grand sweeping changes, but we would be better off with much study and time spent on finding direction, gathering equipment, and reorganizing our instructional program. We focused on two main ideas we wanted to try: one, the "integrated day," with its emphasis on "synthesis of learning experiences"[4] for each child, with the least scheduling possible; and two, "family grouping," which means combining two or more age groups into classes. We saw in our vision all the glorious possibilities of these two ideas – activity-centered classrooms, freedom to initiate one's own projects, older children helping younger ones, children less dependent on teachers, and rooms divided into special areas, where small groups could meet to work, communicate, and learn. The wholeness of the day looked at this way had special appeal for us, as did the idea of a natural flow of activity and talk, uninterrupted by artificial breaks. Learning becomes integrated, for no limits are set as to subject or time. Exploration of all kinds would be a natural outgrowth of children's choices.

As we read, talked, and studied, our ideas began to take shape. We agreed that the ideal way to try this at Shady Hill would be with 5-, 6-, and 7-year-old children. The choice of ages having been made, the next step was to decide which teachers and which classrooms would initiate the project. This was not easy. Many were interested but not all were ready. The decision, of course, became an administrative one. Once "the team" was announced, they met together and the compiling of lists began. I always look back on this time as the paper-and-pencil stage, and I have reams

of notes, lists, charts, and so on to prove it. Briefly, the plan was this: there were to be three classrooms of twenty-one children each: seven 5-year-olds, seven 6-year-olds, and seven 7-year olds. We were to use a building containing three large classrooms, already inhabited by two of the team teachers. We would remove all doors from these rooms, cut a section through one wall and thereby join and open the three rooms. We counted on much movement and lots of sharing of equipment.

We had many other decisions to make, such as:

- What should we call ourselves or our groups?
- How could we best budget our needs?
- What about the use of special teachers?
- How and when should we communicate with parents?
- How uniform should we be in our use of teaching materials?
- What about report forms and record keeping?

The list is long. It took much time to iron out the details of our beginnings and to communicate about it to parents, teachers, and interested visitors.

As our group planning time came to an end with the school year of 1968, we knew that individually we would be thinking about our new venture on through the summer. Happily for us, we were to attend a workshop which was to be held at Shady Hill during July, and "organized to acquaint teachers from public and independent schools with the basic philosophy of the British movement and with some of the techniques that have been developed for implementing it."[5] There were to be thirty of us, with an excellent staff headed by Roy Illsley, headmaster of Battling Brook School in Leicestershire County, England.

At the beginning of that summer I remember writing (we were all asked to write autobiographical notes beforehand): "I desperately need to become involved in materials and ideas on my own level, so I will be more ready to help and believe in children as they come into my class next fall. I hope to become more relaxed and to drop constraints and fears I may have gathered through the years. . . ."

The plan was to give us, as adults, time to feel, think, gather impressions, and do. The course was not to be a series of "tips for tired teachers, but a time to explore and think about our own learning, and to question the basic assumptions and premises of the educative process."[6] Well, we did do just that. We worked and played happily, on our own level, not thinking about children (out

loud anyway) or September, knowing at last the wonderful feeling of children, that *now* is the only reality. I became happy sorting stones collected on a beach, painting pictures of seaweed and watery places, creating a sculpture of driftwood and stone, writing poems again, making a wooden doll's bed for my room, and solving a tricky math puzzle. We went on trips together, ate daily sandwiches together, danced together, met together to share our important thoughts, but mostly we worked apart yet together, which is the way school should be.

I learned about freedom of choice at this workshop. In retrospect I know that I left a lot out of my own planning and that one is just as responsible for what one does not do as for what one does do. This has helped me enormously in working with the children on their plans. So that they won't feel guilty about what they lack and leave out, we plan together to get in all the things they need, as well as all the things they want. I began to feel the rhythm and flow of work-play, hard-easy, active-quiet times during a day and a week, and to realize the frustration a child must feel when interrupted, as well as the hopelessness of needing help and not getting it. I also watched expert teachers deal with my problems and learned how often one should step back and let the child struggle. "Centering" a clay pot became a real challenge to me and one I wanted to master but could not. However, I was led to understand that it was not easy and something I would want to return to again when the need to renew personal creativity should arise in me.

As those short four weeks drew to a close, we parted, knowing we needed time for reflection and renewal, but eager to move forward toward September and the creation of our new classroom environment.

We knew that in the physical arrangement of furniture would lie much of the success or failure of the room, and that by providing the right materials and equipment we could condition situations for specific leads into learning. We had spent hours poring over supply lists; we had asked Mr. Illsley's advice about room arrangement; we had requested donations of vital pieces of equipment and furniture and received much more than we had asked for. We felt rich and ready. We spent August thinking; making private lists; collecting things like year-old wall-paper sample books, egg cartons, costumes, extra cooking utensils, old tires, scrap materials; and making pillows and "discovery boxes." We had each assigned ourselves the task of preparing one "discovery box" which could be used and shared among us. Mine was to be on rocks. (The

others were on electricity, pulleys, and magnets.) Each box was to contain equipment as well as suggestions on cards as to possible projects to undertake or experiments children could make and record by themselves.

A week before other teachers convened at Shady Hill, we came back to continue our planning together and to prepare our rooms. No one could imagine the amount of "things" to be sorted! Each room was to contain all of the basic learning materials for the three ages, plus our own individual choices for the centers of interest into which we would divide our rooms. All of the large third grade desks had been removed from my room. The blackboard had been given to another teacher, and I had five tables, six desks, two screens, and thousands of chairs.

Before I even unloaded my car, I arranged everything in the room into "corners" and eliminated all but twelve school chairs. The "corners" I created first were Reading, Science and Math, Blocks, House, Teaching, Paper and Paste (so named later by the children). Construction and Art work were to be in my back room with the sink, Woodworking went into the hall. Then came the big job of creating the atmosphere with the materials in each corner. I can only say that though we were tired beyond belief, when the time before the opening of school was over, we each thought our creations beautiful, and I can't remember ever feeling so happy, anxious, and empty all in one. But it felt good. The room looked like a workshop waiting only for the children who would bring it to life and fill my emptiness. With their arrival would begin the testing of our beliefs. Our basic tenets of trust and respect for the child, his needs, his individuality, desire to learn, plus our newly gained flexibility with which to work were about to go on display. I was plainly scared. I believed in the children, but I wasn't so sure about myself.

The role of the teacher changes in this kind of classroom set-up; it has to be re-defined and it feels very different. Those of us who have long been successful teachers in traditional classrooms cannot deny that there is security in knowing you can "teach" something well. I had become very dependent in my teaching on sure-fire material to capture children's interest and upon certain routines and traditions which made life easy for all of us living together. It had been a long time since I had felt the insecurities I was about to feel.

Teaching in the integrated day situation is very demanding. "The teacher does not play an authoritarian role, but is rather a participant in the living and learning situation in the classroom.

She has the final responsibility for making decisions and setting the boundaries between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in the room; but the discipline of the group is based on mutual respect between the teacher and the child, and between child and child, and is gradually assumed as a group responsibility."[7] This does not sound very different, but its implementation is. Now the teacher is in the role of observer, guide, and partner to each individual child. She can be in immediate communication with him where he is working by a look, word, or gesture, or just by being nearby. Her participation with the children is of enormous importance. The harmony she can create by her presence, mood, or tone can make or break the day. The teacher must keep track of what the children are doing, talk with them about their work, extend it for them in proper directions. She must move, change, add to, or subtract from the environment constantly. There are times when small groups need to be called to her for specific teaching, just as there are times when she must play her teaching role by ear, picking up cues as she goes along. At the same time that she is steering and expanding thinking, feeding ideas, and asking questions, she must be prepared to stop, observe, and listen to the child's explanation of what he has done. So much of learning for small children centers around communication. But it is tricky knowing when to interfere.

So, in the teacher's management of her room and in her response to children's needs and interests lie the key differences of this new role. "The emphasis is on children learning rather than the teacher teaching."[8] She must still be an enthusiastic, warm, sensible, alert diagnostician, but now, a ringmaster too! There is little preparation for this new role which would make a difference in a short time. The best supports I had were: the conviction within myself that what we were doing was right; the experience behind me of the summer's workshop; the backing of parents and school; and the good rapport we as a team felt in working together. Even now, as I look back on that first year, I know we could not have come through without each other to lean upon. You need a lot of sympathy and trust in beginning new ventures, plus a lot of talk between the people doing it.

I suppose that to our colleagues not directly involved with us we seemed selfish, one-track, frazzled, and too busy for them. I know my friends felt that way. It seemed as though I could never do anything but think, talk, and work on school projects that year. I was a tired old bore to them. Sometimes to myself too, which brings up an important point for those headed in this

direction. It is essential that the teacher not devote all of her time to making the classroom work. This kind of obsession is not devotion but stupidity. It is impossible to bring humor, freshness, and ease into the classroom when one has not been refreshed by things other than worry and work. I know I will not let it happen to me again. Even now I have to force myself sometimes to remember that all work and no play doesn't make Jack dull, it makes him dead. No one wants dead wood in the classroom. In order to keep the balance of a happy, relaxed, yet busy and motivated, atmosphere in school, one must practice the balancing on oneself out of school. That and patience with self. Too often we expect too much too soon.

We are often asked at meetings or by visitors what three things we think were the most important to us in beginning this work with our classes. Our answer is always the same and was from early on. We all agree we could not do without a long-arm stapler, our Nuffield Books,[9] and each other. Let me explain the other two in connection with some of our work.

While visiting schools in England, Kathleen looked carefully at the kinds of work being done by the children and at the way the work was recorded. She discovered that all of the children had "blank books" of different sizes into which went their writing, pictures, answers to questions, practice lessons, and assignments. Books of this kind used in England were not available from American school suppliers so she made her own. The best size for many of these books is bigger (approximately 9" × 13") than ordinary staplers could reach into, hence the need for a long-armed one. It has since become an indispensable tool of trade with us. Often vinyl wallpaper is used for book covers. It is less destructible than tag board. We find many children enjoy making their own books on special topics, but we always have a supply of ours on hand in varying sizes for the recording of daily work. Often we go through the children's "blank books" after school and add questions or ideas of our own as extensions to a child's work, but a strict rule with us is to go over the work itself only with the child present. Yesterday's errors can be tomorrow's learnings only if the communication about them is individual and fully understood by the child. This is one way we use to pick a child up on reversals, spelling, handwriting, English usage, and correct use of information. Better than a workbook, these books allow for thought, creativity, and personal style.

All of the writing of the Nuffield Mathematics guides is directed toward the teacher. They are in three categories; "Computation

and Structure," "Graphs Leading to Algebra," and "Shape and Size." Emphasis is on "learning by doing." For small children this involves working with concrete objects and using the total environment as a classroom through which to learn basic skills and concepts. In discovering relationships for themselves there is not so much need for practice, and many children can be working on different levels with the same material. Having done much reading and studying in the field of mathematics over the past ten years, we believe that the Nuffield guides are the best for our use now. We agree with Joseph Featherstone, who wrote in one of his articles: "A basic comprehension comes best through children's own activities in a classroom designed for permitting choices; and children learn best when they proceed at their own pace." These guides with their excellent foundation in theory are sound in practice and rich in specific suggestions for children's work, but they are not usual in the sense that we know teacher's guides. They demand creativity and choice on the part of the teacher as well. It is in mathematics that the differences between the old and the new methods of learning are most marked. We will no longer allow for technique and mastery of rules alone. We look instead for an understanding of vocabulary and ideas. We explore and use numbers for the real work of counting, measuring, comparing, mapping, graphing, and figuring. To do this we need available much equipment: rods, blocks, unifix, games, abaci, sand, water, bottles, scales, nuts, stones, beans – to mention only a few items in our ever-expanding collections. We want children's number work in these early years to be expressive of relevant things around them.

Our beginnings in the Fall of 1968 were well publicized throughout our school community. Very quickly we became immersed in the activity of children and in our growing struggle to gain competence in this new way of living with them in school. I would be lying if I said we were happy and successful all the time. We had some very depressing days and attacks of insecurity. Teachers cannot change overnight, and we are impatient with ourselves. Still, there were enough successes, there was enough support, so that we knew we were not attempting to do an impossible thing but rather needed time to work through our difficulties. Parents were wonderfully patient with us. If they objected, they did so silently. Here is another instance where feelings of mutual trust most rewardingly paid off. We had many offers of help from parents.

But because they *were* so interested, they and others needed

and wanted to visit us. This almost became our undoing, and I would warn others to limit visitors strictly or have none the first year. There were days when I wanted to tear my hair over the mobs (it seemed to me) that were drifting through the rooms to see the "new method" in operation. It had its funny side too. The children paid them little attention, yet it was obvious they felt their presence. One day when my class had a hospital corner in full swing, with a staff of doctors and nurses on call to remedy any and all manner of medical problems, a visitor from another school quietly stepped into the doctor's office to get out of our way as we assembled for a group meeting on the rug. Suddenly a figure in apron and hat left us, and as she bore down on the visitor I saw her getting her appointment pad ready and heard her say, "The doctor will be with you in a minute. Don't you think you should take off your jacket so he can examine you?" By now I have learned a lesson from the children about involvement and I rarely notice visitors unless they commit the unpardonable sin of participating without being invited.

We were encouraged in November by two things. One, the grade meeting and our parent conferences reassured us that what I have already mentioned about support from them was true. It was obvious from our talks with many that though our methods might seem crazy to them, they believed we did know their children and that the children were happy *and* learning. We also found many parents who wanted to share in our own reading experiences to whom we loaned our books and articles. Their questions often cleared our thinking rather than threatening us. We enjoyed this sharing of our thoughts and work with them. Two, was a visit from Roy Illsley, who was on this side of the Atlantic to speak at several meetings. He talked with us about our specific problems and helped us see that we should be more patient with ourselves. He reminded us of our favorite saying of the summer: "The truly efficient laborer will not crowd his day with work, but saunter to the task surrounded by a wide halo of ease and leisure."[10] He thought we were making haste too fast and forgetting to enjoy our work! He gave us hints about assignments, reminding us that all things matter equally, not just "work," and that we could do more with building up the arts and music. One particular thing he said at that time was to lead us to serious thought about numbers of children in classes. He said our rooms were too big; that the children didn't have to brush against each other enough or wait or share or help each other enough. This has lead us to increase the size of our classes from twenty-one to twenty-four (in 1969). We

do feel that more children can live and work together, but that for our school, now, we must limit ourselves. The facilities of the school cannot bear more enlargement without undergoing change. I also feel that we as teachers would have to learn short-cuts in teaching style and reporting were the numbers to increase much more in our school.

A large responsibility of the teacher in this new role is the keeping of records. To understand the children as individuals and be able to plan for their needs, knowing their strengths and weaknesses, the teacher needs to observe. So that these insights will not be lost, they must be recorded. In a special notebook the teacher keeps an anecdotal record on each child in her class. At first we attempted to do this reporting each day, but the task is overwhelming if conscientiously attended to along with housekeeping, meetings, and daily planning. Now I find myself more selective. It is not necessary to report everyday, but to include important happenings and learnings, how the child reacts to people and specific situations, as well as one's personal speculations as to what is going on with him. I have developed a good memory for these kinds of details and now know that, instead of writing records, I can go to a concert. A summary at the end of the week is often enough.

Other kinds of records, of course, have to do with in-school communications and reports to parents. Our reporting has changed because we now want to discuss the whole child in terms of his total school experience, not stratify according to subjects. I can say only that for each school it is important to figure out the best way of doing the most honest and straightforward job of reporting. Parents have a right to answers from teachers. Perhaps one day we shall achieve the perfect report – I don't know. Since I have been at Shady Hill we have changed reporting forms three or four times and are never satisfied with one more than a few years. This is probably healthy in view of changes in education. Still, there are many of us who believe that the confrontation of a conference is far superior to written statements. Nevertheless, we know that in order not to lose the message entirely, we must write it down and file it away. How best to write it down will continue to be a dilemma for teachers not yet on the scene.

During the course of a given year in an open classroom, the environment changes many times. The important thing is that the teacher be prepared to be adaptable and allow the children's interests to develop. Then the environment will perforce change because of them. I think of an instance that first year where a

child's interest in stones and gems led us from a study to an exhibit, to making our own museum, and to many collecting trips outside the classroom. And another time when Spring was bursting all around us, a group moved right out of doors to study buds and twigs, and the glories of new life were brought inside and a place made where all could observe, record, and participate. There are times too when the teacher will want to create her own interest corner, with leads into learning of something historical, topical, or of interest to her. Our study of space and Apollo Moon shots derived from my awareness of play in the block corner. I then brought in an exhibit of pictures, added a few items to the play, and held discussions with interested groups. As their interest and knowledge increased, the space needed to play and work it out grew until a large mural, the whole block corner, and other areas were devoted to "space" study for a number of weeks. The whole class finally became involved, and interest cropped up off and on the rest of the year.

At Shady Hill we have long been known for our work in "Central Subject," a name given to the integrated study taken up at any one grade level by a class for the entire year. First-graders study Eskimos or Cave Men; second-graders study Indians; third-graders study Bible or Vikings; fourth-graders study Greece; fifth-graders study Middle Ages; and so on. These subjects change rarely but vary considerably from year to year because of the teacher involved. English techniques, geographical concepts, historical facts, plus science, music, and art are united in a study in depth of a people in time and place. It is an excellent technique for arranging curriculum, but, as can be guessed, the teacher is responsible for most of the initial work. She studies and organizes the material to put it in meaningful sequence for her children to learn. All they need to be is receptive. They are easily motivated, because if the teacher is at all scholarly, she has done her homework well, and, knowing her age group, she picks out the most appealing bits with which to engage them. Once they are captivated, she can use all the techniques of group and individual work to get them going on readings, projects, and discussions. It's fun – it works – it's one of the things I always enjoyed most about my teaching. But our team wasn't sure that that kind of technique of organizing curriculum was what we wanted to impose on this frail new venture of ours, where we wanted to emphasize building on children's own interests. We knew that children's play discloses starting points of interest from which the teacher can unfold for them the possibilities of extension, and we wanted to

experiment with this way of learning, unencumbered by curriculum demands.

Activities are more effective in provoking problems with young children than is discussion, so with the blessing of our Central Subject committee and a promise to report a year hence, we freed ourselves of a set study. It is hard to predict what direction an interest will take. The driving force behind it is the children's own involvement and not the teacher's prepared plans or dominating influence, but the teacher is the one who may see the exciting possibilities which unfold only gradually to the children, so she must be ready. A few such topics which arose in our groups that first year were Bridges and Constructions, Printing, Dinosaurs, Space, Undersea Exploration, Hospitals, Restaurants. Some of these had historical implications which were carried as far as both teacher and children felt was appropriate. All had good learning possibilities.

Another way of organizing themes in one's mind is to use the "Study Group" technique. The second year, in addition to centers of interest, we created study groups whenever we recognized an interest expressed by more than a few children. Sometimes we initiated the topics ourselves. Some such "Study Groups" in our combined classes were: Cameras, Animal Adaption, Snow and Ice, Islands, Babies or Human Reproduction, Mapping, Poetry, Knights, Birds, Pond Life. Membership overlapped in some of them, bringing together children from two classes. Most of these study groups operated with a teacher as a guide and resource person. We made use of the activity principle foremost, but also, banking on children's curiosity, we were able to raise questions and problems which led them toward academic work, more questions, dramatic play, much art work, writing, and reading.

It was during the second half of this last year (1970) that I elected to try the Central Subject idea in this setting. Believing as I do that there are certain important things that history and grown ups have to teach children, I felt compelled to see if I could introduce an historical subject which would be appropriate for a vertically grouped class. Motivation by the teacher is important in developing interest in faraway people and times, but too much emphasis by the teacher is not effective at all. Yet there are many benefits to be had from putting oneself in another's moccasins, so to speak. I wanted to see if this kind of teaching would make any difference at all in the class, its operation, its cohesiveness, and its compatibility, as it had for me with other classes.

Kathleen and I discussed this idea many times during 1969 and

became convinced we had to give it a try sometime in order to answer our own questions, as well as those being asked us by members of our School Community. We decided to take on two aspects of the same problem: would it be better to try this kind of teaching in one class, where all the work, reading, and discussion could be contained in one room (as in the past); or could one manage just as well using the study group technique, with members of the group coming from two classes and meeting times confined to specific hours and days?

I chose "Eastern Woodland Indians" as the topic to use with my whole class. Kathleen chose "The Charles River" as hers. Membership for her group was to be limited to sixteen 6- and 7-year-olds, eight from each of the two other mixed group classes. She had organization problems, such as a place to meet and store her materials which could be readily used by both groups, and planning a time to meet, which, because it had to be planned for, was therefore limiting. Yet the activity was extremely meaningful to those children who chose to work with that group. They stayed with it for three months, but I have a feeling that, as a teacher, my satisfactions were greater in the end than were Kathleen's; but then we expected just that.

Setting up an "Indian Corner" in my classroom after Christmas was the way I began. It contained books, pictures, maps, an exhibit of artifacts now owned by the second grade, table, chairs, papers, pencils, books, furs, birchbark, corn, and questions. For several days no one commented, but there was activity and interest. Finally, one 7-year-old said "Are we going to study Indians like the second grade does?" I asked him if he wanted to; he said, yes, and we dropped the subject. The next week I brought in more reading books about Indians and started reading aloud from *Ride the Wind*[11] at our regular story time at the end of the morning. This is a story of an Indian boy of one of the Algonquin Tribes, the Lenni Lenape, that has long been popular with our young children. My 5-year-olds were entranced by the story, the 7s were thoughtful, asking good questions, but it was the 6-year-old boys who were captivated immediately and for whom indentification was fast and thorough!

Now, as interest grew and questions led us to find things out together, the children began bringing in things: more furs, beads, arrowheads, costumes, pictures, and books, and our projects began. I cannot go into detail here with all we made and did – but to conclude: I let this interest and work die its own natural death. It took seven weeks. During the eighth week I put the materials

away, though not out of sight. By then everyone had moved off in other directions. It wasn't until three weeks before school closed that one of the older children said at our meeting one day, "Hey, I thought we were going to make an Indian play for the end of school" – "Yeah!" came many replies, "Let's!" So out came some of the props; costuming began in earnest again; our dancing and drumming were recalled and rehearsed; our favorite legend was prepared for dramatization, and a beautiful, haunting Indian song was created by the group. We prepared the whole into a kind of "Ceremony Play" and presented it for our friends and parents, outdoors, the day before school closed! Interestingly, I would have felt happy about the Indian Study even without the bang-up ending. I had proved to myself that the material was still good and that the study of mankind is ever interesting to "man." The children had made of it and taken from it what was important to them, plus some truths and concepts I wanted to share with them. Then the finish was pure icing on the cake and might never have happened without the older children. They really planned, wrote, and directed the entire operation – another proof to me of their important contribution to a mixed-age group. The whole experience was fun for me too. The interest could easily be re-ignited another year and, with our background, the possibility of moving West with the Indians or Pioneers, or North to the Eskimos, could capture our imaginations. However, there's a nice feeling of realizing no pressure, yet knowing that a tiny spark created by the teacher can have such rewarding results and far-reaching implications. But, I do feel entirely satisfied with the activities and learnings of the other study groups and realize that for some children they were the highlight, not the Indians. I would want to be able to have both experiences in my classroom.

I haven't mentioned reading yet. We are often asked questions concerning the teaching of reading in the open classroom situation. People cannot believe that it is really possible to teach all children individually and "with all that racket going on." To be honest, I wasn't sure myself when I began. What I came to realize, after stumbling around a lot, was that the same techniques apply, that children want badly to learn to read, and that I had to be pretty clear on how best to help each one when the magic moment arrived. Sometimes we group children who need to learn the same thing, sometimes we send them to a special teacher, sometimes we wait and do nothing but watch, sometimes we plan daily individual lessons with a child. All in the interest of supplying the child with the proper "human partner" when he's ready and of

steeping him in confidence and rich background. The leads into reading are all around him in the classroom, and soon he realizes that if he doesn't find out what's on the bulletin board he will be the loser. So he learns the importance of the signs and asks questions. One distinct advantage of vertical grouping is that one can always find someone besides the teacher who knows how to do something.

We use any approach to reading that suits the individual child. In order to find out how he can best learn, we play games, teach him sight words and phonics, and write. Always write. Many of our children have learned the incentive and the idea of reading from their own writing. We want them to write all the time. Any good teacher of young children can learn how to teach reading. It's just more fun in this kind of class. Much of my pleasure in teaching comes from nurturing the school environment to excite and stimulate learning. It is indeed rewarding to be right there with the right material when the child professes an interest to learn something.

Our culture is geared to think of six as the magic age when reading will begin, but all of child development and our own common sense tell us that children develop at different rates and are not all ready at the same time for anything, let alone reading, the hardest task of childhood. How fortunate then that children of three ages can be grouped together for a living and learning experience in which individual readiness is a keynote, competition is at a minimum, and imitation can flourish. We have discovered that among the three ages one can have as wide a range of ability as one has in an average second grade classroom. The difference is that the range looks and feels better to the children in our setting; all the differences are completely acceptable.

One final word on reading – my favorite quote to date on the subject: "If the early teaching of reading and language is human-centered and if addiction has done its work, there will come a time in childhood when pleasure in reading and in language achieves a certain degree of independence from the human partners who had served as teachers. The dialogue that had originated between the child and his family and the child and his teachers is no longer the indispensable component in learning and in pleasure. The book itself has taken over as a partner and is invested with some of the qualities of a human relationship. In this way literature becomes an extended dialogue."[12]

Evaluation of our new program is a constant ongoing process but cannot take the form on paper of more than insight and

speculation at this early date. Generally, we all agree that our children blend easily into a class of peers at the third grade level and are not behind others in knowledge of basic skills; that they have learned how to manage school time and are particularly inventive and independent in planning for their needs both academically and creatively; that they tend to have a doggedness in pursuing their own interests; and that they are more tolerant of the varying styles and paces of learning of their classmates. Parents tell us that their children are showing more initiative at home and that they no longer hear the plaintive "What shall I do now?" from their youngest. Instead, many are astonished to hear their children planning and preparing for activities for themselves. They also note that because of the continuous opportunity for communication and socializing all day long in school their youngsters are apt to be more content with solitary activity at home. Many have told us they are pleased to see the balance between work-play situations which the children now exhibit at home as well as in school. With this more realistic rhythm establishing itself, they feel more a part of the child's learning, and we are able to share in our knowledge of and our wishes for a fine balance for their children. Parents have often told me that home now seems as good a place to learn to read as school does. This indicates to us a need to share our resources with parents. It is getting at just what we intended; that children should not categorize and place learning only in the "school slot," but instead grow up knowing that truly the world is everyone's classroom. "He shall seem idle and think he is in sport when he is indeed seriously and well employed"[13] seems an appropriate thought to remember as we realize that the definitions of work and play are not the children's but imposed upon them by the adult world.

In class we attempt through discussion to talk about "balancing our day" and about "hard-easy" things, so that the child may see that life can contain both at any time and place. The child who finds learning to read easy and painting a picture hard should be equally well thought of and helped to achieve his "hard" thing as the child for whom reading is difficult. We feel that we are beginning to achieve this appreciation among ourselves in class and continue to work on it constantly.

In a world too burdened with technology and conformity we need to be vigilant to bring out in future generations the best they have to offer in independent thought, flexible attitudes, and affectionate understanding. Scientists have determined that the strongest need – and the need most often unfulfilled – is love.

"Love has been the most important factor in the evolution of man," says Dr. Ashley Montague. "The love to which I refer is behavior calculated to confer survival benefits on other people in a creatively enlarging manner; in other words, an involvement, a continuing interest and concern in their welfare." He noted: "We were born to live as if to live and love were one. If we fail in loving, then, we fail in living." For this reason, he contended, schools should really be institutes for teaching the art of human relationships, the "theory, art, and science of practicing the ability to love."[14] I do not believe that we should replace reading, writing, and arithmetic, but I do believe we can and must emphasize a more humanistic approach to living and learning which involves so much more than academics. I find the "integrated day" the most conducive environment in which to deal with these human values, as well as the basic skills, and to build self-esteem, adequacy, and appreciation.

Though our evaluation is not half begun, we feel positive progress even though we ask ourselves searching questions every week. We feel it is important for everyone involved with us to understand what we are doing and that if we move thoughtfully enough we will make fewer mistakes. As Edward Yeomans says, "There can be no instant Integrated Day. It must come, if it comes at all, as an evolutionary process in which much study and trial-and-error are involved, just as it came in Leicestershire."[15]

We feel we have the ingredients for success in our school. In my mind these consist of teacher readiness and commitment, support from parents and administration for change, an adequate supply of materials with which to keep the environment flexible and exciting, good rapport and communication between staff involved, and, last but not least, a complete understanding on the part of the teacher of her changing role. With patience, trust, and imagination thrown in, one cannot fail, for the children love this way of working.

Everyone likes to feel adequate and independent, and I do believe that in this setting we can help children with these concepts more than we could before. Through the door of communication which is constantly open, we are able to show them, literally, that they are capable of learning from and through experiences and that it can be a rewarding struggle to "get" something no matter how long it takes. Not all problems are solvable in one class, one day, one week. Children need time to learn, to think, to make mistakes, and to do over again those things they enjoy and can do well. We have been too prone to rush

them along, through one class after another, planning at least a problem a day which many will not be able to solve in the little time we allow them. This can be too discouraging. We want children to take time to know what they are doing, and why, and what they have learned. We want people for the future who do not fear failure. Mental elasticity and inner-springs would be my gifts to a child, could I give them.

I've talked enough about the advantages of an open classroom, the Integrated Day, a Mixed Age Group, and it is obvious that I am for this kind of school setting for children. Many changes are going on in other classrooms in our school which indicate that the ideas are spreading. Teachers are offering more freedom-of-choice activities in their programs, but, better still, they are looking critically at the old traditional ways of doing things and revising and talking and exploring. We want our school to continue to be a place where individual differences among teachers are valued and can flourish as well as among children. We do not seek unanimity but we look for agreements in philosophy, and we still need a strong central core to belong to. Everyone benefits from innovation in one part of a school. The "ripple effect" reaches out and touches all levels until finally the whole faculty is talking about variations and changes it wishes to make. Then the school has to seize the moment and talk as a whole. New ideas can grow and flourish only where the conditions are right for change and when the teachers are given as much initiative and responsibility as the children and as much trust and cooperation by the parents as we always had in the past. Let me close with a quote from Roy Illsley. It sticks in my mind because I have applied it to us all as we have been growing inside and changing in our ways of doing things. "Creativity is the growing edge of life and the point at which all improvement, all progress, all novelty comes into being."

## Footnotes

[1]"Reflections on a Visit to Leicestershire," *Shady Hill News*, November, 1967.

[2]Three Articles by Joseph Featherstone in *New Republic*, Autumn, 1967.

[3]The Plowden Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education: Children and Their Primary Schools, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967, Vol. 1.

[4]Leonard Sealey, "Looking Back on Leicestershire," *ESI Quarterly Report*, 1966.

[5]Edward Yeomans, *The Wellsprings of Teaching*, NAIS, Feb., 1969, p. 6.

[6]Ibid. p. 8.

[7]*The Integrated Day in the Primary School*, Brown & Precious, Ward Lock Educational, 1968, p. 26.

[8]*Ibid.* p. 30.

[9]Nuffield Mathematics Project Teaching Guides available from John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. 1-16 (and Nuffield Junior Science Guides, SRA Canada, Ltd., 44 Prince Andrew Place, Don Mills, Ontario).

[10]Henry David Thoreau

[11]*Ride the Wind*, Ethel Phillips, Houghton Mifflin Riverside Press, 1933.

[12]"Learning to Read and Write," Selma Frailberg (a paper distributed in 1968).

[13]Charles Hoole, A 16th Century Schoolmaster.

[14]From a reprint in: *Christian Science Monitor*, January 28, 1965; from Costal Outlook (Halfmoon Bay, California).

[15]*Education for Initiative and Responsibility*, Edward Yeomans, NAIS, November, 1967, p. 28.

## Bibliography

The following is a list of books and articles that might be of interest to those who would like to do some reading on the subject of the integrated day.


*The Integrated Day In An American School* — **Betsye Sargent**
(available from the National Association of Independent Schools, 4 Liberty Square, Boston, Mass. 02109 for $2.50)

*Integrated Day in the Primary School* — Brown & Precious

*Teaching in the British Primary School* — Vincent Rogers

*Inside the Primary School* — Blackie

*Crisis In The Classroom* — Silberman
(Synopsis in Saturday Review, 10/17/70)

From *Shady Hill News*, Fall 1970
Shady Hill School, Cambridge, Massachusetts

# THE QUEST FOR QUALITY

*by* KATHLEEN RAOUL

MUCH has been written, both here and in England, about primary education; about a different approach based more on individual differences and less on class similarities. There are workshops on this type of education both here and in England, and increasingly, those going into teaching for the first time are feeling that this approach is more in line with their thinking than the kind of teaching most of us were doing a few years ago. All across the country, schools like Shady Hill and Cambridge Friends are trying this approach in some of their classrooms. Many beginning teachers are starting their teaching this way. And all of us are being asked how our children are doing. Can they really learn to read? What method are we using? Is a 7-year-old on a second grade level? Are they able to compute as well as their regular classroom counterparts? How about spelling? We ask for time, but they want to know now. Why won't we tell them?

So far, we have not often been able to answer these questions in a way satisfactory to the questioner. We are all so new to this kind of teaching that we are apt to be turned off by anything which tries to pinpoint so clearly what we are trying to do. We are frustrated when we can't make them understand. But, unless we *can* answer these questions in a way which means something both to our questioners and to us, I feel that this kind of education will

remain isolated from most children. Unless we can communicate, we will lose all we have gained as people and as teachers, and the young teachers will sink before they have time to rise.

We can and do give our questioners something to read; *Experiment in Education*, by Sibyl Marshall; *In The Early World*, by Elwyn S. Richardson; *36 Children*, by Herbert Kohl; *Teacher*, by Sylvia Ashton-Warner; *The Lives of Children*, by George Dennison. We show them the work which the Nuffield Foundation has done in science and mathematics. But these books, which so inspired us and got us started, do not always do the trick. The accounts of teachers do mention some of the difficulties, but they rightly concentrate most on what they achieved. The Nuffield people naturally pick the best work. And then people visit us, and what they see, on that particular morning, is not quite up to the books. We stammer and look unhappy when we can't seem to communicate.

So it is up to us to do a better job. Reading is definitely not enough. We have to show them what we know in our hearts to be true, that this way of learning is a truly scholarly way to go about it, that it works on any and all grade levels, so that these levels tend to disappear when one thinks this way. That one may start with an interest which may veer off in so many directions that one has experience in many fields of knowledge before one has gone very far. That it is much more demanding of anyone who tries it, but much more rewarding. That although this kind of learning may be slow to start it often becomes self-propelling so that eventually one is living it rather than going to school to learn it.

We are after excellence, just as every teacher in every school in the world is after excellence; but an excellence based, much more than formerly, on independent thinking. This thinking often carries the learner outside the areas we have for years considered the realm of the elementary curriculum. The three R's are just as essential, but in a somewhat different way. They become three tools, among many, which the learner draws on to answer his questions and to deepen and record his thinking. More necessary than ever, they are no longer thought of as ends in themselves.

In starting this kind of teaching and in coping with the many problems it involves, for everyone who is living in the room, examples of excellence are sometimes hard to find. We must look for them, however, because only as we have something to show other people will we have the chance to expand this kind of education to include whole schools and whole communities. So I have looked at three classrooms in my own school and at this

summer, which is passing so quickly, for a few nuggets to share. These will involve adult as well as child growth because, unless both can grow together, true excellence will not emerge from our efforts. Then I shall try to show how I feel we can have more of this kind of thing in our classrooms, so that seekers will not have to ask us questions. They can see, just by walking into a classroom, why we believe in this kind of education.

* * *

In her room at school were shelves of really beautiful junk. Among other things, she found a tall tin can which once held English biscuits. Before long, she had a puppet, unlike any other puppet that ever was; long yellow hair, much like her own, and bright cloth for clothes which used the red of the can but mostly covered the letters – the perfect thing for her father's birthday!

* * *

They had just discovered that the "white spots" in the polly-wog's water were alive. They looked and looked and each time discovered more. They experimented until they could put an old microscope to work. Their excitement carried over until one of their friends was also embarked on his own "white spot" experiments. They wrote a card of questions which made a teacher work hard to find the answers. Each of them wrote and illustrated a book.

* * *

She suddenly found herself in the restaurant business. Her class was having the ideas all right, but it was she who knew when to stand back and when to provide just the piece of equipment, just the ingredient they needed. No one enjoyed eating the pudding more than she.

* * *

She was taking a course at a neighboring college. She was thinking a lot about education and she had it before her eyes every day. Her reading and her children made her see a relation between the kind of education she was doing and the Progressive Education Movement of the thirties. She could suddenly see the kind of danger which might lie ahead if present educators thought they could buy these new ideas as a package instead of working through them for themselves and so finding their own styles.

* * *

He was having trouble with reading, but what he knew about words anyone would envy. No teacher could help him. His touch

was much surer than theirs. One poem was a "dance poem." He formed his own company, and everyone in it felt the power of his words and his strength as a director.

* * *

She loved color. Her dresses were gay, she ordered cardboard in the brightest colors, her bulletin board notices were written with the most violent Magic Markers; and yet, the rest of us wondered why her children's paintings were so consistently exciting. Thinking back, I wonder whether her own tastes helped her see in the work of her children something she especially understood. Living with her, they moved naturally from strength to strength.

* * *

The English books all mentioned homemade work cards. The teachers all tried their hand at making them. None of the children really liked doing them. Then spring came, and the room was filled with the wonders of the outdoors. The children were always popping out to see and smell things. *They* started asking the questions. The teachers became secretaries. It was no fun to do Miss_____'s card. It was much fun to do Martha's flower card and see if she could do yours with *her* flower. One really had to look to answer those questions, but one did not have to write much. They were economical of time and much fun to do.

* * *

One day she wrote an elf story she really liked. Her eyes glowed when she read bits of it aloud to her friends. As she went along, she tucked little illustrations between the lines. Soon everyone in her class was turning out elf stories; some of them long with many chapters. Everyone, young and old, was drawing elves, adding chapters, reading stories to each other.

* * *

A long, long strip of jersey has turned up in a box of scrap. What could they do with it? Would it cover a child? With their teacher's help they wound it around him. It worked. No one could tell who was under the material. Bystanders stopped. Everyone guessed how long the scrap was. It took a long time for someone to find out and there were plenty of people checking him to see he didn't make a mistake.

* * *

He was often "all over the place" but when he told his teacher about his teddy bear, it was a very precise piece of thinking. One day he found a bug. He looked at it and dictated another piece. He

did not usually draw with form, but he really drew that bug. He sat very still looking for his bug in *The Golden Nature Guide: Insects.*

* * *

Although he still felt unsure about reading, he was interested in rivers. He read *The Clean Brook* by Margaret Bartlett. Later, he used her idea in a lovely, sensitive poem about water.

* * *

They had never run a teachers' workshop before, but they had attended two and done lots of work with children. They were troubled by the fact that workshops usually had expensive materials that most teachers cannot buy. They found many of their materials in junk yards and factory discard piles. What little money they had went for art materials of the highest quality. They asked their friends to act as resource people for the fun of it, and nothing was more fun. What their students learned about teaching remains to be seen. What they learned about life and themselves as people, was a very great deal.

* * *

She was very quiet. For months she did not seem to do very much. She watched. Working with older children, one suddenly realized she was standing there. She watched. And in the spring she was reading with ease and delight. She could do all sorts of things with the math materials. She brought a bird's nest from home and made up a card about it. She watched with great joy when an older boy from another class borrowed her card to answer her questions about this very different nest.

* * *

*My Father's Dragon* was read aloud in two classes. In one, the result was an opera. In the other, one child stretched herself to read it. By the end of the year many others, regardless of age, were doing the same.

* * *

They were a mixed bag of grownups, and few of them had had much experience with block printing. Yet day after day at the workshop, they showed concentration which was complete and impressive. And suddenly the room was filled with beauty; prints on paper hanging from the wall, prints on cloth which would turn into skirts and blouses. There was power in their feet and confidence in their eyes as they stood on their blocks, knowing the form and color which would soon appear on the cloth below.

* * *

He was intrigued with the U.S. Geological Survey maps of the Charles River, but he didn't like written work much. He chose drawing the river because he thought it would be easy. He laughs now because it took him weeks to finish that map. Often he was ready to give the whole thing up. He needed lots of teacher support to carry him through. It was copying, but it was intricate, difficult work. As he worked, he read *A Map is a Picture,* by Barbara Rinkoff, and learned about different kinds of maps and about scale. In the end, he had something he could be proud of. One felt, looking at him, that the satisfaction had been worth the effort.

* * *

He did not often go bird-watching, but he watched at home and read a lot. He made his own book about birds, and then he made an index because he had learned that bird guides have indexes in the back. One could look up all his birds in the index.

* * *

They were in different classes and didn't know each other very well, but they both had big ideas. He wanted a cage for a parrot. She wanted to breed guinea pigs. They needed lumber. They had to write notes to the big shop to get it. They measured and planned. He had to design something he could use for hinges. She had to force her small hands to cut heavy wire. It took a lot of time over a long period. Each was willing to give that time. In the end, each had a cage which looked as though the maker was a much older, bigger child.

* * *

The clay work had just returned from its second firing in the kiln. The colors glowed. Many of the pieces were unusual both in shape and color. They would look well in anyone's living room

* * *

She was an inner-city child and perhaps she had never seen spring come to a place like our school. She was there when the flowers pushed up one by one. Poetry and spring were related to her. She found a poem in *Miracles** which she wanted us to dance. She practiced and practiced reading it aloud, but every dance day it was rainy or gray. She waited a long time before we had a day she considered exactly right for that favorite poem. She loved birds and was patient where they were concerned. She read well

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**Miracles:* Poems by Children of the English-speaking World. Compiled by R. Lewis.

but had trouble with comprehension until she became interested in birds. When she really wanted to find out about the habits of birds, she began to remember those habits.

* * *

It was late June, and she was free from school and children for many, many weeks. She was visiting an island in Maine where she had gone for many years. She had long been interested in Natural History, but this year she noticed a deepening of intensity in all her work: a desire to move in new and varied directions, to ask more questions. She tried to draw the things she saw, although this was very hard. She thought about mathematical and musical dimensions as she looked at flowers and birds. She bought carving tools and began tentatively to experiment with block prints of flowers and sandpipers. She realized she needed to be more precise and bought a book of botanical terms. She began to realize how much she still had to learn about the world around her and about herself.

* * *

As I read over these descriptions of work, I can hear people saying, "Why they are just like what happens in my own classroom, and I still have a schedule and move along paths familiar to me." I can even hear myself (as of five years ago) saying it. I know, however, that this work was produced in a different way from my good work of the past. The difference lies in the role of the teacher. Like the three Rs, she is more necessary than ever, but has moved from the center of the stage to the wings. There was a teacher involved in most, if not all of the work cited; but the child and what he wants to know is now in the center. Often this child doesn't know what he wants to know until he sees the possibilities. The teacher has set up her environment with many such possibilities in mind, but she doesn't know which one of them will start him off or whether he will come up with something entirely on his own. When he does make a choice, his resources are too limited to get him very far. So, often, are hers! Together they have to stretch to meet his particular need. As they grow together as working partners, project by project, excellence begins to grow. The child begins to see that his ideas are respected and that they can take him almost anywhere. Formerly, he liked his teacher and depended on her to teach him what he had to know. Now, they have many more ups and downs as they struggle to learn about each other and about the matter at hand. Gradually, he realizes that while she may point the direction and show

him new techniques to help him reach his goal, the thinking and learning that go on are basically his responsibility, just as the final product is also his, not hers.

If we are to judge our children not by scores or grades, or by what we have decided a child of a certain age should do, or by a body of certain facts we think he should know, but by quality and quantity of his work, we shall have to look a bit more closely at this quality. In the work cited above, certain things stand out. It is not thought of as good work for a five-year-old, or a teacher or a second-grader, but simply as good work. It is often not in any one subject but cuts across many subjects. It is often generated by a personal interest of the learner and it always has style. Happily, it is apt to be catching. The child who wrote the elf story soon had the tables in her room filled with people writing their own elf stories — all of them as different as the people who wrote them. Such work does not occur every day in any classroom and almost never at any scheduled time. It flowers at the most unexpected moments from, often, the most unexpected people.

We are going to have to get lots more work of this kind than we have so far to make our point. How? Certainly not by setting our teeth and deciding to get it. Adult creative work does not happen this way, and it won't happen with children either. It was nearly three years before I saw the kind of thing I was looking for the first month I tried this kind of teaching. Lots of other things have to come first. The teacher has to set a climate for the children to grow in, change it, and change it again before she finds ways that are right for her and right for her own particular children. When she finally finds one, she must realize that it may be quite different from that of the teacher next door or, indeed, any teacher. Until children feel entirely comfortable in their room with their teacher and with each other, little high-quality work will take place. Nor will it occur without a lot of fumbling and wrong choices and blind alleys. Ask anyone who has ever attended a teachers' workshop on this kind of teaching. If *we* need time to fumble before we learn to make wise choices and to produce work we like, surely children do too. After a great effort and a great result, a dry period often follows. We can help a child find things to do in these waiting periods but we shouldn't over-direct him. He needs to feel around, walk around, talk and think. Then, suddenly, often in quite a different field, something special will emerge. In a climate where these things are noticed by the others living in the classroom, good work begins to spread.

Don't they need to learn skills? Of course they do. The children

building the cages ran into all sorts of technical problems. They had to learn the correct way to use wire cutters, how to measure accurately, to see what materials they needed for each step. A person who has written a story no one can read, needs to make his work legible. A person who wants to read a difficult book has to solve the problem of attacking long, unfamiliar words. One is willing to struggle to understand a microscope when one really *has* to see the "white spots" more closely. One must measure the cloth to settle the bets on how long it was. They want skills and they want help in learning them, but as much as possible they should be taught these skills to solve problems *they* have initiated and not as ends in themselves. As teachers, we need to become more skilled in watching what the child is doing, in talking with him about it, before dashing in with the needed skill.

And, speaking of skills, we are going to need more of them ourselves than we ever dreamed of in the old days. If we want children to look at things the way scientists, and artists, and historians do, we have to know the skills they will need at *our* level as well as theirs. We have to learn to look at life through these peoples' eyes. There is, of course, no paragon in all the world of teaching who can do all this, so we have to learn more about sharing the skills and interests we have. New teachers must be found who bring not only experience with children and a desire to teach this way, but who have a skill this particular school needs. If the school is strong on musicians, then perhaps a potter is the one to hire, or a mathematician. If, over a period of years, schools pick their teachers this way, then the nonpotters, nonmathematicians, nonmusicians, will begin to learn from their friends how people with these skills feel and how they go about their work. Then potting and mathematics and music will begin to percolate all over the place. As teachers learn more things, so will the children. Then the quantity of good work will begin to increase in every class and in many different fields.

Teachers will be less preoccupied with the old standards and take more responsibility for finding new ways to evaluate what goes on. They will have a greater willingness to share their findings with both those who agree and those who disagree with them. In the end, they will have an understanding of life, people, and art which is both wide and deep, as well as products from their classrooms which anyone, anywhere, can respect.

From *The Newsletter*, March 1971
Cambridge Friends School, Cambridge, Massachusetts

# THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

OPEN Structure II – the Middle School – is made up this year of the third, fourth, and fifth grades, sixty children in all from 8 to 11 years of age. The[y] use four rooms for activities which range from quiet reading among the cushions of the tower to large-scale carpentry work in the project room.

Emily Tucker and Billie Brey are full-time grade heads for thirty children each. Lisa Winslow and Cornelia Tierney are part-time teachers, and Patsy Asch acts as a full-time resource person. When they came to write about the Middle School for this newsletter, the result was five separate pieces; but their areas of concern complement one another. What follows is as individual as the teachers themselves.

## Planning

Planning for the Middle School can best be described as a flexible design to enable children to achieve a set of goals, the main one being to assume part of the responsibility for their own learning. Plans and goals are constantly subject to change or even abandonment if they prove unrealistic or do not meet a need. World or local events may postpone plans; thus, a seminar on the Middle East following Nasser's death seemed more important than the proposed seminar about Salem and colonial children. When programs do not appeal to a variety of children, attempts are made

to change or supplement them. A music project, "Experiments in Sound," was tried when boys avoided music. A male student teacher joined folk dancing – and greater participation by boys continued even after he had left. Posted material on space exploration evoked so little interest that it was taken down and the project dropped.

Teacher preparation entails agonizing self or group evaluation, joyous sharing of exciting achievements, realization that goals are often just beyond reach, and *hours of planning.* Teachers constantly feel the need for more time to plan than is now available to them.

**Commitment**

Commitment is ironically intertwined with choice and responsibility. It is pretty hard to be committed to something you were told you must do whether you wished to or not, and it is often hard to fulfill a commitment unless you take responsibility for your choices.

On the nicest level, commitment is personal. One boy was given a beautiful book on the Vikings which included many drawings of ships. He decided that he wanted to build a model of a Viking ship. With a little help, he made a rough plan of his ship and a template for the center rib. From then on, day after day, he has worked with almost no help and with no one nagging him to finish. An open structure allows this to happen frequently. Often ideas are stimulated by adults, by something someone has brought in, by a question a teacher has posted; but many students, once involved, internalize the idea of completing a task and need no one to follow them.

"Seminars," the form in which much Middle School formal instruction occurs, necessitate other commitments. Here sequential material on given subjects – music fundamentals, the physiology of man, the history and production of newspapers, the Middle East – is developed by combining the students' previous knowledge and then by moving to new levels of understanding and skill. To provide for continuity both in presentation of subject matter and group membership, students are asked to commit themselves to attend all sessions of any seminar that they choose, after the second meeting. This is often painful because other exciting things may arise, but it is important for students to live with their own choices. Seminars also help students to see themselves as members of groups, and to learn to commit themselves to group concerns and to develop cooperative skills.

Finally, teachers try to develop, in the children, commitment to certain attitudes they hold as fundamental: violence is rarely, if ever, the best way to solve a problem; everyone has feelings, so be sensitive to those you encounter; people must be able to depend on one another; people are different, and differences are valuable to society; recognize when you are being manipulated, etc. Teachers constantly try to differentiate which values and skills are really relevant and which no longer pertain – and may even be dangerous to pass on. Again, open structure is an asset because no demands are taken for granted. Each time a child is pressured by a teacher, there is an opportunity to reconsider the value of the request in terms of the individual involved.

### The Value of Failure

Two little girls wanted a desk. Without planning, they grabbed the nearest wood and nailed pieces together (even though the legs were uneven and the nails far too big). A day or two later someone leaned on it, and it fell apart. Because they then asked for help and learned how to make a plan and to measure, their next effort was far more successful. The desk is now painted and in use, and a great source of satisfaction to them both. Failure can be turned into an incentive to learn new skills and to raise one's standards.

Or, from another point of view: "Well Me and Kathy at first we made a terrible desk to put our things in and all we herd was crash crash bang ! ! ! so we thrue it out and made a new one. we put some funny stuff I forget the name of it and its grat."

### Making Choices

8:30 already. Time for group meeting in the classroom. The teachers have hardly had time to finish writing the schedule in the teachers' room. Just when they think they have things set up for the day – lots of appealing choices – a minimum of conflicts – someone remembers that Tuesday is the Middle School's day in the art room. Shuffle things again.

The children are seated on the rug, schedule blanks in hand, ready to make a morning's worth of choices. Attendance. It's frustrating to have five people straggle in late. It's nearly impossible to choose things wisely if a child misses this meeting – the explanations, reminders, introductions to new possibilities.

"Now let's look at today's schedule. At 8:45 the art room will be open to eight people from our room. Mrs. Porter says we'll be beginning painting portraits today."

Fifteen hands go up.

"OK, but before you decide for certain, let's go over the rest of the schedule. The Middle East seminar also begins at 8:45 – who has a commitment to that?"

Twelve people.

"The project room will be open all morning for people with work under way. People who are in Lisa's math group, don't forget to see her first thing. At 9:30 people reading *My Friend Flicka* will meet in the library to discuss chapters three to five."

Susan raises her hand, looking anxious. "But I really want to do portrait painting, and I'm in the *My Friend Flicka* seminar."

"Why not plan to get an art tag later in the morning from someone who has come back from art?"

Paul raises his hand. "Fred and I are starting a newspaper, and we want people to write articles for it. If you want to, talk to us today to get your assignment."

"At 10:15, after snack, the boys who meet with Martha Stokes to design a model city will meet in the shop. Also, there will be a new seminar beginning today at 10:15 on the Netsilik Eskimos. Patsy's here to tell you about it."

Patsy explains that the seminar will last for four weeks or so. She shows some of the materials they will be using – books, games – and tells about the movies and discussions they will be having. Several hands go up.

More decision-making problems. Sometimes it's a matter of choosing between two pleasant alternatives, sometimes of not being able to find *one* satisfying plan. The children begin to think:

. . . I don't know if I want to do the Eskimo thing or not – I'm already studying about Nigeria for my library project. I guess I'll try it today and see. . . . Why did I commit myself to so many seminars – I hardly have time to draw anymore . . . I want to read all morning. . . .

They start working on their schedule blanks. Some are leaving chunks of time free, preferring to see what comes up; others write decisively, filling it all in.

"All ready? Let's go."

### Mixed Age Groups

There are three kinds of situation which come up frequently in a mixed-age class. The first is the helping relationship, which although it is most often an older child teaching a younger, is sometimes reversed. In the latter case, there is no stigma attached

to not knowing or to needing help; chronological age becomes an irrelevancy, and each person is distinguished by who he is and what he does. In the second situation, the children learn that there are many ways of going about a thing, and that several different methods may be valid in a given situation. The third is the situation where several children contribute according to the talents and capabilities of each. One child writes a play, others act, others paint scenery and arrange props, others run the record player and the lights for the performance.

* * *

In one part of the room two girls sit together with a toy clock. One sets the hands, and the other reads the time. Near them an 8-year-old turns to an older child and says, "I don't get this." The older child obligingly leans over his shoulder and the two puzzle over the words in the book together. Another voice says quite loudly, asking whoever will listen, "How much is eight times six?" and an answering "Forty-eight" from across the room ends the interruption. In a corner an 8-year-old boy reads aloud to a 9-year-old girl, who helps him when he gets stuck.

Three children are working independently on the Question of the Day. "If a turtle travels one yard in a minute, how many feet can he cover in fifteen minutes?" The oldest of the three does the computation in his head; the youngest uses base three Dienes blocks, counts out fifteen "threes," and then recounts to see how many "ones" there are. The third child multiplies on paper. All three will have answered the question, and none looks down on the other's method.

Just before the day ends, the teacher reads aloud from *21 Balloons*. When she reads that the balloon in the story is 6,000 cubic yards in size, a 10-year-old asks, "How big is that?" and a younger child offers the idea that if they measure the room they can compare. One child knows how to find volume and says what must be measured, another dutifully measures with the trundle wheel; these two pool their information and give it to a third, who converts feet into yards. A fourth child does the necessary long multiplication on the blackboard, and the child who originally asked the question divides 6,000 by the result and announces how many rooms will fit into the balloon. A cooperative effort between five children of varying age and skills has brought satisfaction to all.

**Evaluation**

In the Middle School standardized tests are used to help

measure the progress of each class as a whole, but tests are not used for evaluation of individual children. Because teachers work with the children individually or in small groups, they do not need tests to find out what the children know. Instead, both students and teachers write continuing reports.

Recording by teachers is done on 3x5 cards, which are kept in a file available to the Middle School teachers. Weekly evaluations by all five teachers, with the help of various specialists, point up needs and achievements of each child. For each student there is a teacher whose responsibility it is to hold conferences with parents once or twice a year, and write formal reports to be sent home. This teacher is not necessarily the one who works with that child most often during the school day. Therefore the report sent home is not her evaluation alone, but the combined comments of all the teachers who work with that child. The file cards include both social and academic behavior of the children:

"Bobby finished reading his first real book by himself – *Squanto.* Told me the story with obvious pleasure and excellent comprehension."

"Hannah can't seem to understand borrowing – worked alone with her for an hour today, tried Dienes blocks, then written problems. She seemed to understand, but after one interruption forgot completely – looked at my face and guessed."

"Patsy finished Exercise 5, SMSG V – can read and write numbers to one billion. Beginning decimals."

The students record their thoughts in their own large unlined notebooks. They put poems, stories, quotations, diagrams, pictures, into their notebooks anytime during the school day, and they write evaluations of themselves during 'reflection time,' a quiet period at the end of each school day.

The entries vary. Some list activities:

"I liked measuring peoples feet. I did a graph of dice throwing. It was fun. I slid down the hill. I did the Fir Tree play and I cooked some cookies."

Some express moods and social opinions:

"I hate boys now and forever. . . ."

"This was a long week."

"I don't like to force myself to learn something I don't like. It changes. One year I couldn't read interesting books and the next year I read and read."

Some explain the things they have learned:

"This is a great game I played with. First, you make a shape on graf paper, Then you give directions. (He has graf paper too) and

you try to *tell* the directions so the other guy can draw the figure. . . ."

"In Mystery Powders today we were cooking. The flour turns yellow. Baking Soda No results. Corn starch catches fire. Powdered milk smells. Sugar melts, turns yellow, then black."

Some give their opinions of the activities, the teachers, and themselves.

"I really got into things this week and Mrs. K. gave me a new book last Wednesday and I have been working on fractions in it."

"This week was a lazy boring one. Even though nothing went badly, nothing went well either. I felt lazy and couldn't seem to face Math or anything. I feel guilty. Next Week I will have to work harder to make up for it."

"I don't need to work on anything."

As the children struggle with recording, they begin to realize that they are increasingly responsible for themselves – for their behavior and their learning.

From New Canaan Country School,
New Canaan, Connecticut

# A MEETING WITH PARENTS

May 13, 1971

LET me put this in context. I will be talking about a letter which I sent to you all – a letter about a plan to mix kindergarten and first and second grades next year.

The letter said, "There still remains in our present 'graded' arrangement a residue of the age-based comparisons and tension which can so often characterize traditional classrooms. In addition, we can clearly see the interests, sharing, and warmth which are so often evident when children of different ages are together." One of the questions submitted prior to this meeting is particularly relevant to this: "Since the children start to read in the first grade, wouldn't it have been more logical to have integrated the first, second, and *third* grades? Also wouldn't that be better psychologically? Has the school psychologist been enthusiastic about the move as planned?"

Implicit in this question, "since children start to read in the first grade," is one of the reasons why we *would* like to mix kindergarten and first and second grades. Children do not all "start" to read in the first grade. We have a number in kindergarten who have learned to read this year, been instructed this year, asked for the instruction; and we have a number of children, and always have had, who will leave first grade as nonreaders. But I think if we mix them in kindergarten and first and second grades we may take off

them this pressure of our society which suggests (as the question does), that they should learn to read in first grade, all at the same time, in the same way. Our psychologist *is* enthusiastic about the plan. She says that if two things are learned, it will be worth it: one is that the older children learn to cope with the young and be patient with them; the other is that the young ones learn that they cannot do all the things that the older ones can.

**Organization.** How will we use the space? Is the plant sufficient? Can the rooms include materials for *all* ages, especially 5-year-olds?

We think so. The Welles Building is versatile. The second grade rooms *are* smaller than the kindergarten and first rooms, but they are also very close to the multi-purpose room. They are already spilling out into the halls — part of a corridor-type arrangement which will be very nice if we can achieve it. This is all part of the main thing we have to do, which is to give the 5-year-olds room to run and play, as well as challenge the older children.

We are thinking of turning the animal house into an outdoor playhouse. We are planning to share existing equipment, such as the indoor playhouses, and we want to make optimum use of the multi-purpose room. All these are ways of extending the space we have. The problem of space is never really solved, and we are aware of that. In short, we are aware that there could be problems, but we are not overly concerned.

How will we group the children?

Not randomly and out-of-the-hat, as somebody asked. We will separate siblings, and we will consider personalities and friendships and aim to create comfortable groups that will work well together. They will not necessarily be grouped by ability.

We see the mixing of ages as a way to more friendships, not less. I know that some of you are concerned that it will limit the number of friendships your children may have. This is to be a neighborhood concept. A child will be free to play with anybody. The arrangement we have *now* is socially limiting, even though the children are grouped by age. Given the oldest and youngest ages of the second grade (slightly over forty children), there are almost forty more children in the first and third grades who fall within that age span; and yet because they are not second-graders, they tend not to play with each other. I think this mix will *increase* the population from which your children will find friends, even if age is the paramount criterion for friendships, and I do not feel it should be.

Next year, however, by way of transition, we will have planned opportunities for mixing children of similar ages. For example, in music each child will have one class with children roughly his own age and one class with a mixed group. The same plan will be used in the Math Lab. As they are now planned, rhythms and shop will be by age, and in fact, while there will be plenty of chance for woodworking in the classrooms, shop has always been scheduled only for second-graders.

Another question was the use of other teachers. The specialists, such as a reading coordinator or the person in the Math Lab. How will they help all the children?

Just by taking a group out of the classroom they give the teacher more time with the others, in addition to the help – the valuable help – that they give to those whom they help directly. These specialists will also serve as advisors. One will go from room to room, making sure that the children who need to learn how to read are being taught and that those who know how to read are being challenged. The same will happen in mathematics and in other skill areas.

To answer another question: Yes, we do plan to have small-group instruction. The children will be "left on their own to do their own thing as much as they show they can." If not, they will be grouped and taught formally. We *can* and *are* doing this in integrated classes. This is a great advantage over the traditional method. The assumption in the integrated day classroom is that every child is capable of learning by himself. That is just an assumption – it is not yet a reality in our classes. However, within the framework we can take those who are unable to learn by themselves and give them a great deal of direction, and as I said, we are already doing this. The converse assumption in the traditional method is that nobody is able to learn by himself and there are few, if any, opportunities for individual learning.

This leads to questions of *Teacher Competence.* Can our staff do it? Are they stretched too thin? Will there be too much diversity among children for them to cope?

Children are diverse creatures. Age is just one aspect of diversity among them. They are unique. We want to accentuate this and not group them arbitrarily. We see them as individuals. The teachers expect to work harder, of course. And of course the children will help because they can do a great deal of learning by themselves in the integrated day.

Will teachers have less time for the children?

In a sense I think they will have more time, at least, more

*important* time. The quality of the time is very important. I'm sure I am not the only teacher in the room who has, in the middle of a forty-minute class period, realized that only three or four students were "getting it." The rest were either bored because they already knew what was being talked about, or confused because they didn't know it. In a sense, the children in such a room are being deprived of teacher time even though a teacher is talking at them. I think it is *how* a teacher spends his time with children that is vital.

What about the teachers' training? I see this change in organization of classrooms as getting maximum use from a really wonderful group of teachers. In the old way, two head teachers shared their experience and ideas – now, six will.

These teachers have varying degrees of experience, of course. There is an exceptionally well-trained assistant staff which will be paired off with the head teachers to complement each other's strengths. With a reading consultant, someone in the Math Lab, two highly competent volunteers, and with the efforts made this year, we feel the staff is ready.

The main thing is the interaction and cooperation among them. We do not want six groups of twenty or so isolated children. Part of the idea is to mix all 120 children and their teachers to bring things together – to bring the Lower School together.

And a final asset is their divergence of opinion and their ability to work together. For example, they all look differently at this change. This difference is based on their strengths, their weaknesses, and their experience. Yet they all want to intermix age groups; they all plan to devote their energy and skill to it; they are all conscientious with high standards, and they all plan to share their problems and concerns.

We *have* concerns. Our main one is the 5-year-old. It is very easy for a parent of a 5-year-old to think that this is an ideal program because he may be reading and writing like a 6- or 7-year-old before he knows it. But, as I said, it is very important that he be a 5-year-old. We don't want him to be overlooked. We want him to have room to run and we want him to learn that he cannot do all the things that the older ones can. We are not as concerned about the second grade experience as some of you parents are. We base this on the experiences of other schools and the fact that so many of us are equipped to challenge them.

It is important that you realize that we are not "cut-and-dried," that we are not sailing, without thinking, into some new idea. We have worked long and hard to be ready. We are prepared to make

changes when and if necessary. This staff of teachers has concern for children and the ability to relate to them. It is not an eight-to-four job, and they are not handling "things." They are concerned, sensitive, resilient, and imaginative, and I'm proud to be working with them.

**The Experience of Other Schools.** What other schools have started this program, when – and what are the results?

Well, it is not a program, in the sense that a program can be imported from place to place. We are developing what we think is best for us, and I am sure that the other schools have done that too. What we do will differ from what they are doing – to a degree, but we agree in substance.

Some English schools and Montessori schools have been mixing age groups for a long time. Nationally, public schools in North Dakota and Vermont, and some of the schools in New York State (perhaps you read about the open corridor schools in *The New York Times Magazine*), are heading toward open classrooms. Prospect School in New Hampshire (which was written up in *Good Housekeeping*) and Beauvoir School in Washington, D.C., are mixing age groups. Fayerweather Street School in Cambridge and Mead School in Greenwich are two new schools which were planned for mixed-age groups. Germantown Friends School in Philadelphia and the Foote School in New Haven are planning to change to mixed-age groups next year. The Agnes Russell School at Teachers College has done this for years. Bank Street School has always mixed ages.

Two schools very comparable to ours, in Cambridge, have changed to mixed groups – 5-, 6-, and 7-year-olds. I asked their headmasters what they thought of their new grouping. One said: "Absolutely heavenly." His school started mixing ages in 1968-69. Their reading teacher has been a specialist for ten years and says that she has never seen such good readers or writers. They are much improved at third grade on Stanford Achievement Reading Tests. At the other school, which also started grouping this way in 1968-69, the headmaster said that the children are *at least* as well prepared in terms of academic skills and that they are a great deal more independent, self-reliant, and resourceful. There is no ceiling to what they learn. The children are able to take an important part in education, and they have a growing concern and respect for people with different abilities. There is no place in this system for laughing at the "class dummy" or standing in awe of the "class genius." He also reports that friendships develop across age lines.

Clearly, multi-age grouping can be, and is, a very successful way of structuring a school.

The fourth area I would like to talk about is the *Risk of Experimentation.* To begin with, I do not see our change as an "experiment," but there is the risk of standing still in a changing world. There *is* a risk in assuming that you are doing things perfectly. We are where we are now because of change. When someone asks, "Why change a good going thing for an experiment, something that hasn't been completely proven?", I suggest that what we have now is a result of *not* standing still in the past. *Not* completely proven? No. But certainly critical eyes turned on the traditional way shows *it* has not been completely proven either.

This is not a radical change. Children are not different now from what they were in 1966-1967 or 1956-1957. The world has changed, and we have changed. We have learned more, read more, worked with the integrated day, benefited from new data, and we have visited schools which have made this change.

Institutions *must* change to adapt to the changing needs of people. Already the Middle School and Upper School are contemplating changes. (Not, as far as I know, multi-age grouping.) But our children are going out into a different world from the one we knew. It is less stable and less predictable than before, and children must be prepared to cope with it – and then, of course, without change we would still have not only dunce caps and hickory sticks, but a one-room school with children of mixed ages all learning together happily.

It is the function and responsibility of independent schools to pursue intelligently new opportunities and challenges. If we stop making changes, if we stop adjusting, if we stop trying to improve, if we stop admitting mistakes, if we stand pat and complacent, *then* take us to task.

The fifth area is *Goals.* Are we headed the right way?

Skills are necessary but *not* sufficient! Children must have them in order to communicate with and contribute to the rest of the world, but they are not enough. And in answer to those questions about tests, I ask, "Are skills measured best by tests? Are they best learned early?"

For example, our fifth grade teachers tell us that some mathematical skills are learned more easily in fifth grade if they have not been taught formally at an earlier age. Yet, if we do not "give it" to them earlier and we do give them standardized tests, their test scores will be lower.

I'm not sure that things are best learned where the tests tell us

to teach them. There is no correlation between good spelling and intelligence, between college marks and career success, or between the age of learning to read and future ability.

Tests usually trail a good curriculum. They change too slowly. Even now, ten years after the New Math has been introduced and accepted, there are, I feel, no tests that can adequately measure what the New Math is trying to develop in the minds of children.

Furthermore, tests can dominate a curriculum. They tend to tell us what to teach. Tests tend to make teachers accept and teach for conformity.

But we must evaluate! If tests are made with national norms which we like we will use them. If not, we will have to adjust standardized tests to our own uses. We do *not* plan to lose touch with the rest of the world.

What will happen to children who leave our school for other schools in their mid-Lower School career?

That depends, as always, on the child. Some will do beautifully, some not so beautifully. Even those not advanced in skills should be readier to acquire them and use them intelligently. But we do not expect the skills to lag in multi-age grouping.

We cannot, if we wanted to, prepare children for the many schools they go to. Last year children left for Ohio, North Carolina, and California. We want to prepare them in the best way we can. To prepare them for *any* change, and we feel that how things are taught is as vital as what is taught.

"Why spend money on us?" Because we look for better ways and are self-critical. Perhaps you don't realize that a number of public school administrators and teachers in Connecticut are coming to us to see what we are doing and to take back to their own communities some of the things they see. The letters which they have written tell us what they have learned here and plan to use at their schools. This is the sort of role an independent school should play (and it goes hand-in-hand with our visiting public schools to learn from them). We are *not* like all other schools. We want to save the best of the past, of course, but not cling to it so blindly as to overlook new and better ways. And we should be equipped to accommodate change.

The purpose of education is not to pass tests but to learn to cope with one's self and with other people, to have and feel pride in intellectual and creative growth; to develop the power of rational thought; to be equipped to face competition, or to offer help when *that* seems appropriate; to have the skills and personal integrity needed to become a competent adult, continually

learning, growing, and contributing to man's understanding of himself and his world.

We think that this change, this intermixing of diverse ages, is a step closer toward helping children reach that goal.

And finally, there is your part. The parent's part.

1. Do not let us stand still.

2. Keep in mind that the family is the most important educational institution in the world.

3. Give us feedback; and come and visit. When we invite you to visit, and we have done it often, we really mean it.

4. Read! We will suggest books to you; you suggest them to us.

5. Try to attend seminars and workshops which we will provide. It was heartening to have more than sixty of you at our last evening workshop.

6. Ask questions! Implicit in a question is an idea and these ideas are very helpful.

7. Grow with us. Understand our purpose. Judge us on what we do, on how your children grow. Accept the challenge of this change, become involved, and be participants with us.

ELLICOTT WRIGHT
*New Canaan Country School*
*Lower School*